DISSENT

Suppressed by the French Government:

The Suicide of France	ANDRE PHILIP
Political Causes of the Recession	H. BRAND
Rebellious Orgmen & Tame Intellectuals	BERNARD ROSENBERG
Foreign Policy: A Bewildering Debate	HENRY PACHTER
Morality, Reality — and Peace	EMANUEL GELTMAN
Responsibility and History	LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI
Poland: the Evasion of Freedom	LEOPOLD LABEDZ
The Vietnamese Mandarin	JOSEPH BUTTINGER
Politics of the Angry Young Men	MICHAEL WALZER
The Culture of the "Proles"	WILLIAM J. NEWMAN
Lukacs: an Intellectual Portrait	L. STERN
Popular Taste & Agonies of the Young	HARVEY SWADOS
Epitaph for Eros	GEORG MANN

SPRING 1958 75c

DISSENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMONG OURSELVES

All DISSENT subscribers have received a notice concerning the two-day conference of DISSENT editors, readers and writers to be held in New York City on the weekend of April 6-7. A public meeting is also scheduled for Friday evening, April 5, at which Michael Harrington, Irving Howe, Erich Kahler and Norman Thomas are to speak. We plan to carry a report on this conference in the next issue.

Discussion Groups. In several cities discussion groups continue to meet. In New York City several fruitful discussions have been held on such topics as American education, foreign policy and the mideastern situation. The Boston group recently held a discussion on the British "angry young men." In San Francisco, Lewis Coser debated Joseph Starobin on Russia, and Norman Thomas spoke at a meeting sponsored jointly by DISSENT and the *Socialist Call*. In Detroit friends of DISSENT have joined with others in sponsoring a Democratic Socialist Forum. Our St. Louis friends plan a meeting in early May at which Irving Howe will speak.

All of these activities help keep the ideas and purpose of DISSENT in circulation. Arrangements can occasionally be made for editors or contributors to speak in various towns if groups are prepared to handle expenses.

Meanwhile, at a meeting of the DISSENT editorial board a discussion was held concerning the question of discussion groups set up by readers in cities where there are no editors. The consensus was that such groups are to be encouraged, provided they are in general agreement with the purpose of DISSENT, they promote free discussions in which a variety of opinions are allowed to be heard, and they remain discussion groups, not trying to undertake actions of a kind that are best left to organizations created for that purpose.

Secretarial help: We continue to need clerical, secretarial and typing help (afternoons or evening) in New York City, preferably on a regular basis. If you care to do this, please write to our office and we will contact you to arrange details.

Future Issues: The summer issue will contain a special section of the Middle East, some 30-40 pages of articles on this difficult and important topic. In the fall we expect to print a similar section on Communist China, presenting material on the "100 Flowers campaign" and labor camps, as well as analyses of the nature and problems of the regime.

Libraries: Results have begun to come in from our campaign to increase the number of college libraries that subscribe to DISSENT. Generally, we've been sending notes to persons who teach at universities where the libraries don't yet subscribe, and it usually does the trick. Does *your* library subscribe?

DISSENT, issued April 1, 1958, is published quarterly by Dissent Publishing Association, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N.Y. Subscriptions: $3.00 for one year, $5.00 for two years; $2.50 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add 50 cents. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U. S. money orders or checks payable in U. S. currency. Single copy: $.75. Bundle orders of three or more copies: 40¢ each. For information on newsstand and store distribution write to: Eastern News Co., 306 West 11th St., New York City.

Copyright 1958 by Dissent Publishing Association. Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the Publishers. ● Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
● Entered as second-class matter at the post office at New York, New York on April 1, 1954 under the authority of the act of March 3, 1879. ● Volume V, No. 2, (Whole Number 19).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT

VOLUME V
NUMBER 2

SPRING 1958

EDITORIAL BOARD

Travers Clement
Lewis Coser
Emanuel Geltman
Irving Howe
Norman Mailer
Stanley Plastrik
Bernard Rosenberg
Meyer Schapiro

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Erich Fromm
Michael Harrington
Murray Hausknecht
Sid Lens
Frank Marquart
A. J. Muste
Herman Singer
Norman Thomas
Eugene V. Walter
George Woodcock

A QUARTERLY OF SOCIALIST OPINION

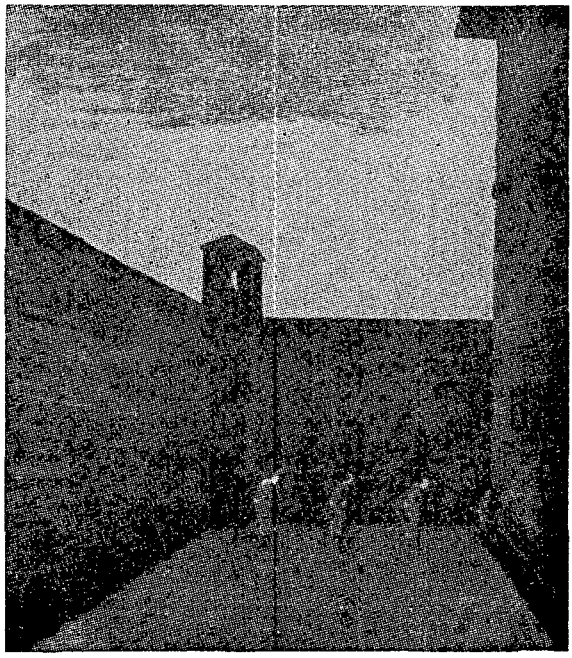
CONTENTS

	Page
JOURNAL OF THE QUARTER	
Political Causes of the Recession—*by H. Brand*	99
ARTICLES	
Foreign Policy—A Discussion: A Bewildering Debate — *by Henyr Pachter*	103
Morality, Reality — and Peace—*by Emanuel Geltman*	110
The Suicide of France—*by André Philip*	115
Rebellious Orgmen and Tame Intellectuals — *by Bernard Rosenberg*	119
Poland: Responsibility and History — *by Leszek Kolakowski*	125
The Evasion of Freedom—*by Leopold Labedz*	130
The Vietnamese Mandarin — *by Joseph Buttinger*	138
Great Britain: Politics of the Angry Young Men—*by Michael Walzer*	148
The Culture of the "Proles" —*by William J. Newman*	154
George Lukacs: An Intellectual Portrait—*by L. Stern*	162
American Notebook: Popular Taste and the Agonies of the Young—*by Harvey Swados*	174
Epitaph for Eros — *by Georg Mann*	177
COMMUNICATIONS	
Leisure—and the Wealth of Man—*by Sebastian Franck and Henri Rabasseire*	183
Popular Culture and High Culture Critics — *by Herbert J. Gans*	185
BOOKS	
A First Book on Viet Nam—*by Frank Trager*	188
Lonely Outsiders — *by Stanley Plastrik*	191
Life in the Factory—*by Jonathan Schwartz*	193
MISCELLANY	
Okinawan "Showcase"—*by Helen Mears*	195
Dzilas and the Yugoslav Press —*by Branko Lazitch*	196
LETTERS	199

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where Milovan Djilas Rots...

The following account is taken from Der Gewerkschaftler, *the newspaper of the German Metal Workers Union, published in Frankfurt am Main. The drawing of Mitrovica, the concentration camp in which Milovan Djilas is held, was made by a former inmate, and is reproduced from* Der Gewerkschaftler.



When you leave the turnpike between Agram and Belgrade at the kilometer stone 78 on the way to Belgrade, you have to use a side road to reach the town of Sremska Mitrovica. The depressing uniformity of the lowlands tires the visitor, but suddenly he will be startled by coming across a modern building surrounded by a lavishly adorned flower garden. Next to the main building he will find barns, silos, sheds, toolsheds and the like. This is the farm of Mitrovica, the much feared Yugoslav concentration camp. Who would not be tempted to believe that in a plan like this humane penal methods are applied within a framework of social progress?

The foreigner sees the stage settings, but he cannot imagine the despair, the human tragedies enacted behind these walls. He may see high factory chimneys and buildings which resemble a huge industrial area, but he does not know what happens inside. He does not realize that this is a mill to destroy human beings.

For many months this writer was among the inmates and he is therefore able to draw a picture of this "KPD" (Home for Punishment and Improvement), this "best and most progressive prison of the world."

The director of the prison, Duschan Milenowitsch, and his aides Peritsch, Markowitsch *et al,* are the autocrats who rule thousands of slaves. Regulations provide that each newly arrived inmate has to pass the first 21 days in quarantine—this period can be lengthened by order of the director—before he is officially admitted, clothed and given a prison number. The two quarantine cells, sharply separated from the others, are usually overloaded with 26 men in each.

But before reaching them all newcomers are first thrown into one of two

Continued on page 200

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Journal of the Quarter

POLITICAL CAUSES OF THE RECESSION

The recession has been deepening now for 7 months. Industrial production, the most sensitive indicator of the state of the economy, has dropped some 10% during this period—a sharper and swifter decline than took place in the 1949 and 1954 recessions. Unemployment, consequently, has been increasing, and has already risen to higher levels than those prevailing in July 1949 or March 1954, the crests reached during the two earlier recessions. The average workweek has fallen to pre-World War II levels, indicating wide-spread *under*-employment. The real income of manufacturing workers—a measure of employee incomes generally—declined by 4% during the year ending last December, and has continued downward.

This trend is due to contracting economic forces in only a narrow sense. True, the business cycle has not been eliminated; nor can it be in an economy dominated by private interests. But just as the expansion of investment in the post-World War II period was to a large extent stimulated by large government outlays and, under the Democrats especially, by a fiscal and monetary policy favoring it, so could the present contraction have been avoided, had the Eisenhower Administration been willing to do so.

Indications of a coming downturn had been multiplying since late 1956, when employment in some key industries began to slacken. Employment generally was growing at a very much slower rate, from the beginning of 1957, than in previous years. From mid-1956 on, consumer durables were piling up in warehouses; and residential housing was in a veritable slump, despite a vacancy rate approaching the lows of the immediate postwar years. Beginning with January 1957, new orders for manufacturers' durables (i.e., machinery, etc.) and awards for industrial building—both reliable indicators of the future pace of investments—were dropping off markedly.

Nevertheless, the Administration remained passive. It cut defense outlays —a major pillar of business activity nowadays—substantially, and in disregard of the effects of such a cut on employment. The monetary authorities, for their part, enforced a severely restrictive credit policy, the major effect of which was to prevent expansion in just those areas—like housing and the associated durable goods, as well as in municipal and state construction—where expansion was most possible and necessary. There were good *economic* reasons why private business could not, without outside stimulus, keep up its rate of investment—but only *political* reasons why the Administration failed to intervene in time to prevent this recession.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FOREMOST AMONG THESE REASONS was and is the weakening of the foundations of full employment, and with them the trade unions. Whatever their shortcomings, the unions are the pace setters of labor's gains; and even at their worst they cannot be discounted as a potentially major political force.

There is a related, and more general, reason, however: a salient feature of Eisenhower's economic policy has been to balance the budget. There has been a nearly fanatical preoccupation with this. But it is not just a reflection of the businessman's mania for financial solvency no matter what the economic and social consequences. There are two, more fundamental, causes for this preoccupation.

Firstly, it represents an attempt somehow to halt the shift to government authority of the power to make key economic decisions. This power is inherent in the vast and growing size of the budget in relation to gross national product. There can be no question that U.S. business has been dependent on large-scale government spending in the past 25 years for making its growth possible. In some cases —as in construction, agriculture and shipping—it has become a kind of fief, an administrative arm of the government in all but legal form. This implies a trend towards amalgamation of business and government, *with this inescapable qualification, however*: that while Big Business in the U.S. is fairly homogeneous, government is not. It remains subject to strong non-business pressures; it is a sprawling, not altogether predictable, enterprise in an environment which refuses to be Prussianized, and which is unreasonable enough at times to insist on its democratic traditions and procedures, despite the tentacular hierarchies in its midst. So that even though business' dependence upon public outlays is obvious, it rightly fears, and seeks to resist, the political consequences of this dependence. Hence its futile and inept attempts to reduce it.

Secondly, the very real fear of inflation on the part of the big financial interests has led them to oppose strenuously all deficit financing. This accounts for the stringent monetary policies of the Federal Reserve, which led to the astoundingly low, and for many smaller businesses, ruinous level of monetary liquidity during most of 1957. (The corporate liquidity ratio—i.e., the ratio of cash and near-cash U.S. short-term bond holdings to current liabilities—during last year's third quarter dropped to the lowest figures since the Securities & Exchange Commission began to report it in the thirties. This ratio, if anything, overstates *general* liquidity conditions.)

The threat of devaluation of vast debt holdings, to be sure, affects many working and small property-owning people who have to a growing extent become dependent upon old-age pensions; and it cannot be dismissed. However, by invoking anti-inflationary measures which affect the economy *in general,* the administration has brought about two results: 1) the burden of combating the cheapening of the dollar is shifted to wage and salary earners, who stand to lose their jobs as business slows; 2) corporate property interests, who *should* be made to carry this burden since it originates from rising prices from which they benefit the most, suffer no losses of real values through such measures. Moreover, their prices remain unaffected anyway.

IT IS EVIDENT that the Administration has defaulted on its legal obligation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to maintain full employment. In the face of lengthening lines in the unemployment insurance offices, Eisenhower mouthes phrases about the need for confidence, but remains silent about the need for jobs. Business crackpots launch "Believe in America" weeks, kidding themselves into the belief that psychology will turn the trick.

True, certain halting steps to counteract the downturn have been taken. Let me briefly discuss their effectiveness.

1. Defense contract lettings have been speeded. But defense spending, viewed strictly from its effects on employment, today involves two troublous questions: a) The number of jobs involved, whatever its present magnitude, is not necessarily raised by mere increased spending. Rather, contract awards are added to the affected industries' backlog of unfilled orders. Technological developments in defense are so rapid that capacity additions—which would permit increased employment—become too risky. b) The multiplier effect—the waves of spending proceeding from the initial recipients of government outlays to their suppliers, from these to secondary suppliers, and so on—is of doubtful intensity here. Large sums go into the design and fabrication of highly specialized weapons, to relatively few contractors. Their work force is of relatively small size and, moreover, being in the middle and higher income brackets, may be presumed to save a larger portion of their income than ordinary wage and salary earners. This too is a result of technological changes. Military "hardware," with the wide dispersion of its production over many plants and in many areas, and its ability to devour vast amounts of labor and materials, plays a diminishing role. What it did in ending the depression of the thirties, and even in sustaining the Korean war boom into 1953, should not be expected from it now.

2. A number of credit-easing steps have been taken by the Administration. These steps, however, have failed to halt the steepest decline in new loan demands from business since World War II. They should, to be sure, facilitate mortgage marketings; and similar moves in this field in early 1949 and in mid-1953 indeed were a prelude to residential housing booms. The housing outlook cannot be analyzed here at length; suffice it to say that neither the factor of the cost of new homes—which have risen from around $12,000 per average house 4 years ago, to over $15,000 at present —nor population factors, nor consumer confidence, bode well for a new housing boom. It takes, at least, a reorganization of the building industry and a system of government, or virtual government, loans to prospective buyers. As it is, the V.A.-guaranteed loan system, which made slightly less than half of private housing starts possible in 1954 and 1955, has been allowed to die, thanks to the pressure of the big mortgage investment bankers.

3. A word about the much-touted "built-in stabilizers." a) Unemployment insurance and social security payments can do no more than cushion the impact of a recession, and put a floor—and a low floor it is—under consumption. They cannot increase investment, which alone spurs employment. b) Price floors under agricultural commodities benefit a relatively small segment of income earners today. As organized at present, agricultural subsidies operate in large part

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as a regressive tax on the mass of consumers, whose real incomes are lowered by high food prices. c) Full employment, and the steady incomes it brings, is also an unstabilizing factor in an unplanned economy, similar to lessened income inequality (if it exists). The expansion of the consumer durable industries ceases (or slows down, theoretically, to the rate of net new household formations), once the needs they cater to are satiated. Their sharp contraction now more than offsets the intensity of their earlier expansion, which itself was stimulated by the growth in demand associated with full employment, and whose rate was altogether unsustainable.

IT SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE that any modern state will again imperil its very existence by permitting large-scale unemployment. Yet, again, this is the danger the Administration and Congress are courting if they fail to mobilize employment-creating forces.

For we are not in just another postwar recession. Rather, the end of a major cyclical upswing has been reached (*was* actually reached a year ago already, when the rate of expansion, though not expansion itself, slowed). The interruptions it suffered were minor, and were bridged by the impact of heavy foreign aid expenditures and pent-up consumer demand in the late forties, and the tight capacity conditions and postponed equipment replacement needs of the mid-fifties.

There exist enormous renewal and expansion needs in public capital assets. *Engineering News-Record,* a McGraw-Hill publication, estimates the backlog of public works at over $60 billion. American cities are literally rotting at their core; a multitude of welfare and natural resource conservation projects await development; there is a need for perhaps 18,000 new schools. Moreover, the potentials of foreign assistance for the world economy, and hence for that of the U.S., have not even begun to be tapped; rather, foreign aid as it has shaped up has tended to drain economic assets into the wasteland of military uses of skills and materials.

The state and local authorities do not have the revenue base which would permit them to go into the money market for the required funds. To develop these areas, therefore, the role of the Federal government, which alone has the power to create the necessary credits, is essential.

But neither the Administration nor (as yet) Congress have shown any disposition to embark on these programs, except in the cramped spirit of shopkeepers. This is understandable only on political grounds: such programs involve not merely capital but operating expenditures as well. Thus, they become "built-in" welfare enterprises, with substantial claims not only on economic resources—and their impact on taxation—but on social loyalties as well. Initiating them on a scale and in a manner sufficient to stabilize full employment demands fundamental political decisions.

The postwar period of prosperity and political sterility is behind us. We are entering a new era, the shape of which is still uncertain. It will be no vacation from great anxieties. It promises a growing degree of internal political polarization, as economic questions once again move to the forefront of politics.

H. BRAND

March, 1958

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Foreign Policy—A Discussion . . .

We present on this page, and on page 110, *two approaches (or attitudes, as distinct from programs) to foreign policy. Readers are invited to participate in the discussion, whether in criticism of the views presented here, or independent of them. Space allowing, we will make every effort to print any reasoned statement.*—THE EDITORS.

A BEWILDERING DEBATE

Henry Pachter

I

Inevitably the world is heading toward another "summit" conference. Working feverishly to redefine positions which they had assumed for propaganda purposes, diplomats prepare formulas to end the cold war which they know the other side will reject. Trying to place on the agenda items which most embarrass the opponent, each refuses to discuss the other's demands. In contrast to any business meeting, where the parties anticipate the limits of agreement, this Summit Conference has no meeting ground, no terms of reference and hardly any negotiable objects.

Why, then, does it take place? One reason, patently, is that the Russians demanded it immediately after launching their sputnik and scuttling the UN Disarmament Committee. Confident that under the circumstances the State Department would furnish a perplexed world a new proof of its reputed inflexibility, they asked for a conference which was to listen to their terms of surrender. This led to the second, and seemingly very democratic, boost for the idea of a Conference —the frightened peoples of Western Europe and Asia, naturally yearning for safety and disregarding their governments' pleas for watchful calmness, agreed to listen with more enthusiasm than anybody had expected.

The prospect appalled even the most inveterate critics of Foster Dulles. Joseph Harsch, heretofore an advocate of "negotiations in good faith," called the conference craze "the clearest example of Moscow's capacity to manipulate Western opinion against the wishes of Western governments so long as these governments remain less competent in [propaganda] than the Kremlin . . . This meeting is to be held because the Russians wanted it to be held. They get credit for what appears popularly to be a peaceful exercise." Even George Kennan, who was soon to become the hero of the Summit myth, warned the Western powers not to participate in any conference that had not been thoroughly prepared through diplomatic channels.

Meanwhile the peoples all the world over hopefully responded to the beck-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oning banns and to the summons for a ritual of "peaceful exercises." They expect to be given some visible proof of "negotiations in good faith," for sad experiences have not disproved the adage that "they don't shoot while they are talking." Men of good faith —pacifists, socialists and other leftists who ordinarily would not allow their dog to take a bone from Eisenhower or Khrushchev—naively believe that a get-together of these two chums might transform a power contest into a human relationship. An almost archetypal myth depicts Napoleon and Alexander peacefully meeting on a raft to divide the world—though what followed was not "peaceful co-existence" but the abominable Peace of Tilsit and the invasion of Russia. No "Summit Conference" was required to liquidate the Berlin blockade, the Korean war and the Suez adventure; but it was from Munich that Neville Chamberlain brought "peace in our time," followed by the rape of Czechoslovakia and the invasion of Poland; and Roosevelt wrote letters to the Mikado up to the minute of Pearl Harbor.

Another myth, of more recent origin, has found its prophet in the martyred George Kennan. For reasons that must astonish no one more than himself, his brilliant mind is credited with the immaculate conception of a new "Plan" which will settle the cold war. Richly embellished in the imagination of the masses, his epochal radio talks were received like a new Gospel of Peace and Kennan's "assurances" were the single spark that fired the fervent demand for a Conference. *Prima facie,* it is hard to understand why. A careful reading of Kennan's book reveals no proposals which others—Walter Lippmann, Kurt Schumacher, Aneurin Bevan and Marshall Tito, to name just a few—had not offered at a time when Kennan himself still preached "containment" and negotiated the NATO treaties which now seem to stand in the way of his solution. Worse —like Stassen and Dulles he does not suggest anything the Russians had not previously dubbed "unacceptable." E.g., his interim proposal for mutual withdrawal would leave the American army in Europe; the present price for a Russian retreat from the Elbe, however, is abandonment of *all* American bases overseas and evacuation of *all* armies from *all* foreign soil (excluding, of course, Lithuania, Esthonia, East Poland, Karelia, Bessarabia and the Russian possessions in Asia). Kennan is silent on those overseas bases which are the Kremlin's nightmare. In spite of this discrepancy, believers can wax quite indignant when critics question the realism of the mythical plan.

II

Even harder to understand is the collateral myth which styled Kennan a spokesman of the Left. In those same lectures which made him its authority on foreign affairs, Kennan has repudiated all the slogans which, since Woodrow Wilson, have been considered hallmarks of Democracy. The internationalist Left stood for American involvement in the defense of freedom everywhere; Kennan preaches "disengagement" not only militarily but politically, too. Ignoring the lessons of Kadar and Grotewohl, he asserts that Europe is protected not by the presence of American "trip-wire" divisions but by the absence of Quislings—as though Duclos and Togliatti were not ready to serve!

Another example—leftist internation-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alism unanimously sponsors foreign aid programs. Kennan did not attack the niggardliness of their execution or the misappropriation of their resources, but the underlying Liberalism of opinion: that rich countries must share the responsibility for the welfare of their underdeveloped neighbors. Unlike his radical followers, he did not recommend a United Nations fund for international development; nor did he deplore with them the "strings" often attached to our overmilitarized aid projects. On the contrary, he seemed to say: If we must spend money, let the recipients be our friends.

To top this comedy of errors, Kennan made mincemeat of Wilson's gospel of "open covenants openly arrived at"; an experienced diplomat, he favors secret negotiations. In open conference questions of prestige stifle all good intentions to try a rapprochement; professional negotiators fear the pressure of public opinion to bring home from the conference table some make-believe success. Moreover, by insistently demanding that the government prove its love of peace, the opposition in democratic countries often indicates to the other side how to get its prize cheaper. Any trained diplomat will exploit such kibitzing to raise his ante, and his opponent then has the choice of either making an ill-considered concession or stiffening into an unyielding attitude which earns him the reputation of inflexibility, or worse. Exasperated by the free-wheeling speculations about that ever-lengthening extra mile to meet the other side, one Israeli diplomat recently complained that no poker player would sit down at a table under conditions the free press was imposing on him. In fact, the operating mode of an open conference is productive only of face-saving devices and sham agreements; to achieve success, negotiations should not be conducted under pressure of time and of public opinion.

Nevertheless, it is precisely public opinion in the Western countries which has become impatient of waiting, and now forces the powers to stage an "exercise of peace." Stated more specifically liberal, labor, pacifist and socialist opinion accuses the conservative governments in the West of bogging down in the impasse of stubborn, military thinking. Scientists join them in declaring that time is running out, that megaton tests must be stopped to prevent an irremediable poisoning of the air we breathe and of the food we eat. Statesmen look forward in horror to the day which is not far, when more and more nations will own atomic bombs; no inspection even now can control any longer their manufacture.

As their continent is being spiked with missile bases, Europeans naturally stall before they let themselves be pushed beyond the point of no return. Any plan promising "disengagement" will be seized upon eagerly; even a minor form of disengagement such as the Rapacki Plan seems to offer—that feeble straw of hope that their country might be spared the disgrace of becoming a launching base—must look attractive to people madly in fear that they are losing their freedom of action. Admittedly none of these proposals does away with the real causes of conflict and Kennan even points out that his suggestions are designed to intensify other forms of the power contest in other areas; yet their suggestiveness is enhanced by two factors of political psychology. The old notion that weapons are the cause of war and that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an arms race must end in war (which was partly correct in the last century) has retained its imagist strength far beyond the circle of pacifists and socialists, particularly in Europe. Those who realize that the present armament race already has resulted in a stalemate are, in turn, searching for means of institutionalizing or confining the stalemate to circumscribed areas. We all are used to thinking in visual images, and looking at a map we feel reassured by the sight of a neutralized or atom-free zone which seems to separate the adversaries physically. This type of thinking ignores a fact which every chess player knows: one constantly fights for the points which are not occupied by either party; big wars start either from brushfire wars (and, Dr. Kissinger nothwithstanding, tactical bombs are of the same kind as megaton bombs), or because the big powers deny each other an area which has no master. In his crude way, Krushchev made this point when he said in London: "You keep your Germans, we'll watch ours." We must look at the peace plan implied in these words.

Contrary to its propaganda behavior, Soviet diplomacy considers disengagement and round-table conferences as just pawn ideas in a much bigger game. Its real estate in Central Europe serves the double purpose of a glacis against attacks from the West and of a stopper to keep the satellite empire bottled up. Why should anybody give up such valuable property? Contrary to the illusions of some social-democratic speakers, Khrushchev is not annoyed with the Poles and Hungarians to the point of yielding them up to "capitalist exploitation," and he still thinks that rebellious Poles under a Soviet government are better than hostile Poles in an independent government. Moreover, the Poles and the French socialists agree with him that divided Germans are better than neutralized Germans whose future designs are as uncontrollable as their armament. (Incidentally, the German Socialist Party's expert on disarmament, who favors withdrawal, and Adenauer's foreign minister Brentano who fears it, both emphatically reject the Kennan-Bevan assumption that a neutralized Germany can be kept unarmed. The withdrawal idea covers conceptions of quite different significance.)

Of course, Khrushchev would like to keep atomic missiles out of Germany; but what he really wants is an assurance from the United States that no American arms will be used to liberate "his" Germans. His idea of the Summit Conference was that it should legalize the *status quo*. All nations, but especially the U.S. government should recognize *de jure* what Russian arms had conquered *de facto*. Even if some form of evacuation could be agreed upon, it would be conditioned upon the *right* of Russia's armies to return in force whereto in 1956 they only came in violation of law and treaty. With the U.S. seal on the birth certificates of all "democratic people's republics," neither Hungary nor, possibly, Eastern Germany or Poland should give the United Nations any more cause for indignation. In return, Russia would keep her hands off Africa and the Middle East. Ever since Stalin offered this deal to Truman at the Potsdam Conference, Russians of both the pre- and post-Thaw schools have been yearning to persuade us that "peaceful co-existence" could be had at this price. They would rather have a tête-à-tête with the United

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

States than deal with so many negligible nations; they would rather see the United States mount the watch on the Elbe, and be stuck there, then allow it some real disengagement under cover of a system of alliances and a fluid status quo.

Oddly enough, Mr. Dulles understands Tovarich Khrushchev and has signalled to him through unmistakable actions that he accepts this definition of co-existence—provided only that he does not have to say so. Breathing the fire of "liberation," he has created an artful smoke screen under which he has maneuvered for disengagement; deceitfully staging Crusades against Bolshevism, he has always respected the interests of the Soviet state. In Hungary, in Suez, in Germany the two Metternich disciples have co-operated to maintain the status quo, and above the din of popular clamor for a conference they have developed a curiously artful technique of negotiating-while-not-talking-to-each other. They agree to freeze the tensions rather than to disentangle anything and to take chances. They are preserving peace by means of a suspended suicide pact, and little can be said for the perverse grandeur of this system of divided world government except that it seems to be fitting for the atomic age.

III

The Left has justly attacked the cruelty and ultimate futility of the balance of terror; but it has opposed to it nothing but a bundle of suggestions from an earlier age. Some of them are nothing but helpful advice to keep a Secretary of State from making a fool of himself; in this category are most of the "twelve points" recently published in *The Nation,* ranging from a demand that passports should be granted for travel anywhere, to the incontrovertible argument that we should recognize all existing governments. But did recognizing Mao help the British? Obviously, to be more reasonable than Mr. Dulles does not yet mean having a peace plan, not to speak of peace itself.

A second batch of suggestions answers the qualms of our own conscience rather than the tribulations of power politics. All would be well, we are told, if the U.S. only would help divided countries to unite and subjected nations to liberate themselves. Honestly, would the unification of Germany increase or decrease tension on the Polish border? In the atomic age, the question is legitimate: Would fulfillment of national aspirations everywhere strengthen world peace or complicate its maintenance? Nor can I suppress the question: Shall Nasser's agents be allowed to murder socialists because the French officers who murdered Tunisians are of the same color as Norman Thomas? To be morally right is no substitute for a foreign policy, whether the righteousness is that of John Foster Dulles or C. Wright Mills.

A third group of proposals which has great appeal to common sense, indeed, derives from the ancient concept of outlawry. Why not outlaw war? must be the first reaction of anyone whom war ever struck as immoral. *A fortiori,* to outlaw the greatest horror, atomic poisoning, will be a popular desire, as irresistible in the long run as it is legitimate; sooner or later the powers must come to some agreements, possibly through the new International Agency for Atomic Energy, to stop the tests and to regulate the manufacture of weapons grade fission products; they must achieve this par-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ticularly in view of the increasing danger that small countries will acquire atomic weapons. Such an agreement, however, would mean acceptance of the Dulles-Khrushchev system of duopoly. It might prevent a further increase of the tensions, but would not be designed to decrease them. These necessary requirements are not even minimum peace proposals. To mistake outlawry for collective security is a grave error and (as Salvador da Madariaga pointed out after serving ten years on the old League of Nations disarmament commission) likely to confuse the issues and to divert attention from the overriding objective—which of course is peace.

The question is peace, indivisible and multilateral peace, which unfortunately no piecemeal approach can smuggle into the baggage of a diplomat under the guise of helpful advice on winning friends among the neutral nations. The diplomats will use these and similar ideas—banning the bomb, forbidding the tests, thinning out the forces, creating neutral or atom-free zones—as so many bargaining points in their game of power politics. To offer them as a medicine against the conflict is either ignorance or an attempt to kid oneself; and no one has warned more earnestly against such notions than Kennan! He considers even disengagement, which he advocates, as nothing more than a means of adjustment to the changes in an existing equilibrium! Far from promising that the new equilibrium will be more comfortable, and less "competitive" than the old one, he certainly repudiates the savior ideology that has been built on some of his suggestions. Moreover, he intends to use his proposals to haggle stubbornly. To achieve a true new balance, the West should get some equivalent for disbanding NATO. If no comprehensive settlement can be reached, more points of friction might be exposed than before, and the "flexible" policies may have endangered the existing "inflexible" balance of peace without creating a foundation for a new one.

IV

It is noteworthy that in all these debates conservatives have occupied more radical positions than the radicals. The Baruch Plan, offering to place all atomic facilities under an international authority, certainly was more revolutionary (and, incidentally, nobler) than the hysterical demand to "ban" the bomb while leaving the blueprints in the hands of the military. Likewise, the piddling cure-alls which some radicals have used to tranquilize their conscience (unite Germany and breathe, create neutral zones and relax, recognize China and feel good) only can evoke pitying smiles from the professional negotiators whose ten-year-long labors have produced comprehensive plans for mutual control of total disarmament and a profound understanding of collective security and of the conditions under which peace can be maintained. On the Left I know of only one group of people who could be called radicals; they are the unconditional pacifists, unilateralists and defeatists who don't want people to die for Berlin any more than for Danzig. They deny collective security and are interested in their own salvation rather than in the survival of mankind. Their peace of mind, however, has nothing to do with the preservation of peace, which is a practical question.

In the atomic age, peace goes before conscience and even before justice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most socialists instinctively but tacitly admitted that much during the Hungarian crisis. But did they admit it to themselves as clearly as Léon Blum recognized his *"lâche soulagement"* (craven relief) after Munich? A clear answer to this question is harder to get than an intelligent one. Socialists tend to clear their conscience by pointing to Dulles' grave mistake in November, 1956: had he then offered the Russians Kennan's plan of mutual withdrawal, they might have accepted it as a face-saving way out of their plight. For a day indeed, they seemed to be pressed so hard by world opinion that they themselves suggested something of the kind. Had we been courageous enough then and there to follow up and daily to increase the pressure, perhaps Hungary and Poland would have regained their independence and Tito might have returned to the Western camp. But the Russians withdrew, not their troops, but their offer to withdraw. To follow up would have meant to coerce, to threaten, to be ready to send supplies and even to protect them. The charge of American intervention could have been substantiated; not the Russians but the Americans would have been indicted and condemned in United Nations; socialists in Asia would have wondered whether American socialists were using the American government as a front or were so used by it. Likewise, the socialist mayor of Berlin has been praised for, and indeed owes his job to, his courageous intervention to prevent Berlin workers from marching into the Eastern sector and carrying the revolution into the occupied zone.

In fact, at the decisive moment, when the fate of Budapest on the one hand and of Nasser on the other was decided, we were with Dulles and Khrushchev, and we cannot live down the shame of that day. Some socialists now continue to ask Dulles daily to do in 1958 what he should have done in 1956—it's like Lady Macbeth washing her hands! We have chosen Peace over other values which we cherished in the golden age when the choice was ours. Radicals once supported revolutionary wars and wars of liberation; at other times they condemned all wars no matter how good their cause might have been. Now practical pacifism is developing in a new direction. Once its virtue was to refuse all co-operation with any government; it sought martyrdom through defiance of State and Society. But the victims no longer can choose their martyrdom; instead of being driven to the slaughter, pacifists learned to resist evil. They accepted shameful alliances and cooperate with their enemies. They are caught in the same shameful peace with everybody else—and not only must they defend it, they even must understand the use of power in defending this kind of peace.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Foreign Policy —A Discussion

MORALITY, REALITY—AND PEACE

Emanuel Geltman

Can there be a "foreign policy" for socialists? In a world not of their making or choice, have socialists anything to offer but a moral stance?

Against the harsh realities of world politics, morality might seem to be the least effective of instruments. Yet a certain kind of "close engagement" with *realpolitik* may prove to be a way simply of succumbing to the disasters of power, a form of crackpot realism.

At a moment when no other defense has yet been devised against nuclear war, political morality is actually the last weapon left to mankind with which to save itself from destruction. That is why time is so important: time to try again, time to make up for past mistakes and failures, time to reassert the idea of the human in an inhuman world.

I

We can assume that both Eisenhower and Khrushchev want peace, their conception of it anyway. The one is perhaps animated by humane considerations; the other by calculated interest. For the moment it comes to about the same thing. Time may be said to work for each—if each can meanwhile have his own way: if Khrushchev can crush rebellions, consolidate his bloc and penetrate neutral areas; if Eisenhower can patch up pacts and shore up allies. Time, however, also works for humanity, if it can be used for a few steps toward decency.

At any given moment, time may help one or the other bloc. Two years ago, after the 20th Party Congress, it seemed to be working for the West. Today, after sputnik, it seems to be working for the rulers of Russia. But we are concerned with time in another, more important sense.

As socialists we are committed to the democratic nations to the extent that we are committed to preserving democracy even as we strive for a radical resolution of social and human problems. But if we cannot impose our view of social justice on a world that has not yet elected it, we can and must make common cause with the many others who argue that the devastation of nuclear war far outweighs any conceivable victory. It is a bloc made on the commonest level of immediate interest. (Which is not to say that we are indifferent to other, non-nuclear wars. But the cold war, which is the locus of international relations, is being waged in the shadow of nuclear missiles. We can be pacifists or not as we choose, but we cannot deny that war waged by men recomposing the elements is *different.)* Socialists are not in exclusive possession

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of this wisdom; it is obvious enough even to the most benighted of statesmen. What the world waits for is a *sign*.

A sign of what? A sign of idealism, a sign of expedience. A sign of will and intelligence. A sign of comprehension. That is why George Kennan's recent proposals have occasioned so wide a debate and interest. That is why the Kremlin has gained a propaganda edge with its proposal for a summit conference. That is why the sentiment for a cessation of nuclear bomb testing keeps growing.

Do any of these *assure* peace? Obviously not. Intercontinental missiles can reach across the world and devastate a "disengaged" Europe as finally as a Europe choked with Russian and American soldiers. A summit conference might reduce the world to prescribed areas of servitude or imperial "influence" as easily as it might temporarily reduce tensions. Enough is already known about strategic and tactical nuclear bombs to make the mere cessation of tests a ghastly comfort. By itself it would not be a deterrent to the future manufacture of bombs—fission, fusion and fission-fusion—given know-how and productive capacity.

But this precisely points up the issue. Is it visionary to ask, to plead, that the tests be halted—and halted, if need be, unilaterally? There is the clear and present danger (a good enough doctrine!) of radioactive contamination. On that basis alone, the tests are an outrage against every human being in the world. Russia says it is willing to discontinue testing under certain conditions of international agreement. Whether its proposals are motivated by sincerity or deceit, is best left to skeptical experience. We, however, are right to make our demand of the democratic nations. Our voices, whether as socialists, liberals or conscience stricken scientists, are heard loudest in the democracies where we are permitted to speak.

Nor can we as citizens of the United States beg the question by incessantly pointing eastward. The slave camps, the mass murders, the decimation of peoples are hideous crimes that can never be expiated by the rulers of Russia. But the fact remains that the first atom bomb was dropped by the democratic government of the United States. The fact remains that many bombs were tested and stockpiled before Russia had anything to test. We cannot escape that special responsibility no matter how virtuous our democratic institutions and high our standard of living. It is not a question of whether Dulles has faith in Khrushchev; why should he? It *is* a question of whether, let us say it, the Japanese people have faith in us.

Ending the detonation of nuclear bombs, and halting their production, is a *sign*. There is, we repeat, no special socialist wisdom in this proposal. And it is not notably anti-capitalist. There is nothing in the request that a capitalist nation cannot fulfill. Nor does it, regrettably, guarantee peace. Yet, without it there is no socialist policy. It is a moral demand, and it is very real, not least of all because it *is* a moral demand.

II

Unless the powers abjure diplomacy altogether and retreat into an insularity that is unthinkable in the modern world, or commit themselves to an immediate resolution of the conflict by arms, there will be conferences. Whether in the UN or among the powers directly, there will be talk and nego-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tiation of a kind. For what else is the practice of diplomacy?

Khrushchev has skillfully focused such attention on a summit conference that the issue has acquired a mystique of its own. As have other issues too—like the recognition of Peking, and the admission of Mao's representatives to the UN; like the Kennan proposal to immunize Europe. On the basis of past performance we have the right to be cynical about summit conferences. Yet with the cold war eroding the energies and minds of nations it seems ludicrous not at least to talk. Conceivably a socialist nation, if there were such, could afford the posture of principle by refusing to confer with nations which hold their peoples in subjection; and there are times when socialists best serve international morality by insisting that their governments refuse traffic with rulers who deny their peoples essential freedoms. This is not, however, a posture that makes moral sense in the present context of *realpolitik*. What remains a socialist responsibility is to maintain a skeptical watch on the proceedings, to warn against false and naive expectations, to examine covenants secretly or openly arrived at for the callous clause and monstrous gimmirc. There have in the past been proposals to abate the fury of the cold war by peaceful division of the world into gigantic spheres of influence. It is an appealing idea in certain circles. How readily it would mitigate the crisis! How horribly it would condemn the world!

It may well be that Kennan's proposals come too late to have any practical effect on the course of world affairs. We can only speculate on what the effects would have been had they been an instrument of the U.S. policy at the time of the Hungarian revolution. Nevertheless, the interest that Kennan's lectures has generated is in itself revealing and important. We cannot easily dismiss this as a journalistic tempest. Which is not to say that Kennan's proposals should be the exclusive terms of international discussion. As a matter of fact, the debate has centered about only one aspect of Kennan's position, and only a few writers have gone ahead to comment on his "surround," his military preoccupation, and that only in passing.

Whatever the merit of Kennan's proposals, here again is an opportunity to seize the initiative—to give a *sign*. And people are waiting: in India, in Poland, in England.

There have been moments in recent history when socialists, despite their principled objection to occupying military forces, were at least obliged to doubt that unilateral military withdrawal was in the best interests of the people; such a time was the peak of conflict in Berlin. But that is not the case today.

There is no question but that the people of Europe wish to be rid of their "protectors." The Hungarians spoke for the Russian satellites, and with heroism and despair. The audience that responded to Kennan seems to speak for many in western Europe as well. It may be that these people are clutching at a straw. But the fact that they clutch is indicative of how they feel. That the Poles could score a small diplomatic triumph with their proposal for a "denuclearized" zone is also indicative of how urgent is the desire to be free of threat. The Poles sense the desire in all Europe for, and have special reasons for wanting, *a sign*.

It is, of course, ridiculous to sup-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pose that the Kennan proposals embrace a lasting benefit for Europe or for the world. The European people, given the time to pursue it, have however an opportunity to radically alter the terms of international discussion. Various steps have already been taken to amalgamate certain areas of national interest, in the direction of a United States of Europe. We are a long way from a representative parliament of European peoples, but here is where hope lies, here is where socialists have an opportunity. A Europe asserting itself economically and politically is no longer a Europe reduced to playing third fiddle. Imbued with a socialist content, it can present the world with an entirely new balance of forces. And why shouldn't it be so imbued?

III

Perhaps what we require is to face the issues as they are, and not as they have been distorted by the cold war.* What we have said about nuclear testing is morally right, if it is right at all, regardless of how it affects the cold war. Policies in all areas of human endeavor can be related in some way to "foreign policy." Especially as socialists, we do not have one set of principles for domestic use and another for foreign entanglements. Integration is a factor in our international position, but we stand for integration and the complete rights of Negroes because these are, in and of themselves, and apart from any international considerations, essential human needs.

The same may be said of nuclear bomb tests and of economic aid to underdeveloped countries. The issue is there whether the summits confer or not. There is actually something grotesque about Eisenhower and Khrushchev poised to pour bounty on needy nations. If India requires a half-billion dollars to assure its stability, and elevate the living standards of its people, it needs it whether our midget-brained congressmen can be persuaded that it will be one in Russia's eye or not. *As the haves we owe it to the have-nots!* That is good socialism. It is moral. It is also hard political sense.

Above all, a morally effective socialist policy dictates closest attention to the fulfillment of individual independence and growth. In world affairs that defines itself as national opportunity. Economic aid without the fullest opportunity for unfettered national status is an empty beneficence. The irresistible (and it is that!) yearning for national existence in Asia, Africa and Latin America is truly a confirmation of our faith in the self-respect of humanity. It is proof that humans can aspire to the intangible. That this can be subverted to undemocratic ends no more invalidates it than Jim Crow unions invalidate unionism.

No issue is more fatefully linked

* Some issues need to be reduced to size. For some years we have been witness to a debate in principle over the recognition of "Red China." Why principle? It may well be a principle of Knowland's career. But why should liberals meet it on the same terms? We offer it as a prediction that Mao will be formally recognized in time, and that Peking will be admitted to the UN before then. It cannot be said that the state of the world will be materially improved by either. However, insofar as it is an issue, its resolution may be a *sign*—towards time, if not peace. Again, a socialist nation might refuse relations with a tyranny, and socialists at times may demand that their governments not debase a struggle for liberty by recognizing the assassins of freedom. The government that recognizes Khrushchev and Franco and Trujillo has little cause not to recognize Mao. And if the UN is the assembly of the present governments of the world, why Chiang and not Mao?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the peace and the ultimate sanity of the world than this. We have seen nationalism at work heroically in the Russian empire. Liberating forces in the Russian satellites will certainly be intimately influenced by nationalism. At this very moment, the Middle East and North Africa are the very center of attention.* What happens in this area in the next year may prove more important than anything we have so far discussed. Far more is involved than nationalism, but the ingredient of nationalism is present. To see in the developed nation-states of Europe an opportunity to move forward to union, while giving the backward nations and peoples an opportunity to develop their nations, this is socialism. This is moral.

IV

A genuine peace is impossible in the condition of a world divided between capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism. The one cannot triumph over the other without plunging the world into unimaginable horrors. And if it could we would merely face other crises, perhaps more painful. There are vast areas of difference among socialists; no socialist can presume to speak for socialism *qua* socialism. A socialist policy is constructed of many solutions, attitudes and objectives, many of them not in themselves socialist.

But whatever gives people a breathing spell without thereby strengthening the forces of tyranny in the world; whatever allows, say, the people of Poland to help determine their own destiny and the people of India to improve their economy by democratic means—that, if not uniquely or immediately socialist, is certainly harmonious with the outlook of socialism. We are not today in a position to determine immediate policies; but we can, within the limits of our resources, continue to point to those possibilities—practical and moral—which may lead to breakthrough, may push past the impasse of the power struggle. That is why it is our special task as socialists to respond to and advance every *sign,* every impulse toward peace and justice.

---

* The coming issue of DISSENT will present an extensive discussion of the situation in the Middle East.—Editors

Coming... **In our next issue**

NORMAN BIRNBAUM discusses C. A. R. Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, in the light of present British politics

KURT SHELL reviews *The Labor Government and British Industry*, a recent book by A. A. Rogow

MICHAEL REAGAN discusses "Max Lerner's America"

GEORGE WOODCOCK presents "Alexander Herzen: Ancestor in Defeat"

and A SPECIAL SECTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

(Planned for the Fall: A special issue on CHINA)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shortly before going to press we received the article published below. Written by André Philip (a leading spokesman of democratic and independent socialism who was recently expelled from the French Socialist Party for asserting his views), we consider it of sufficient urgency to bring to the attention of our readers. This article appeared in the March 6 issue of France-Observateur; *the issue was immediately confiscated by the French government.*—THE EDITORS

THE SUICIDE OF FRANCE

André Philip

French public opinion, kept in ignorance of the true state of affairs by design and deceit, does not yet understand that the Sakiet bombing marks a decisive turn in the Algerian war. We have constantly maintained that a military Dien Bien Phu cannot possibly occur, and this is so. But more and more Sakiet appears as a diplomatic Dien Bien Phu. We cannot yet measure the full extent of its consequences. They will unfold in successive stages. But this much is clear.

France cannot possibly win a military victory in Algeria. On the contrary, the military difficulties can only grow from month to month. It is easy enough to scoff at Lacoste's "last quarter of an hour" which already has stretched out to more than a year and a half, but only a few months ago the Algerian National Front (FLN) was declared to be finished and the war in Algeria won. Today it is more bloody than ever; even if individual terrorism in the cities appears on the wane, regular battles have resumed throughout the countryside and are spreading from east to west throughout the whole Algerian territory. It seems as if we experienced during the winter months a situation analagous to that which followed the military victories of General de Lattre in Tonkin when he tried to take advantage of them by immediately engaging in negotiations. His advice was not followed, and he died too soon to impose his policy. In Algeria, too, the opportunity to negotiate from strength was not exploited and seems now to have gone.

If, as seems possible and even probable, the greater part of the Algerian population, Moslem as well as European, is sick of the sufferings of war and ready to support the first one who offers a reasonable compromise, there are still two irreconcilable sides. But the irreconcilables among the French are older people who prefer to state their case on the streets rather than on the battlefield; a firm state could bring them to reason. By contrast, the extremist element on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Moslem side is represented by the youth; and those under twenty-one constitute the majority of the population. *As long as the military struggle continues, the FLN will have no problem in keeping its ranks filled,* and recruitment in the coming generation will be limited not by the number of volunteers, but solely by the possibility of arming them.

With the prolongation of the war *the organization of both sides perfects itself.* The FLN's arms become more plentiful and effective. In the same way as China was impelled to intervene more and more openly in the Vietnam war toward the end, more and more countries are now sending arms to the Algerian rebels. Even if we hermetically seal the Tunisian frontier, arms will be brought in by sea or through the desert. It is not possible to control effectively a territory which is defended by chains of mountains and which backs up to the Sahara.

At the point where military victory becomes impossible, the Algerian conflict becomes an international matter.

Againt their will, the Americans, assisted by the British, have been drawn in; they can no longer disassociate themselves.

INDEPENDENT MOROCCO and Tunisia are in the hands of ardent patriots, patriots formed in the tradition of French culture. It would have been easy—perhaps it is still possible—to establish a strong alliance with them. The exact juridical terms of such an alliance (whether federation or confederation) are of small importance. The essential matter is to maintain a currency union and a close collaboration in economic development. So long as they remained subjugated these people could think only of independence. Once independent they could see for themselves what was lacking and could recognize that in the modern world a people's political autonomy can only be safeguarded within the framework of a larger international community. Morocco, like Tunisia, was ready to associate itself anew with France; Morocco still seems open to such a course. But we have done everything we could to alienate Bourguiba from us irrevocably.

In any case, both Morocco and Tunisia want to remain within the Western orbit. Neither has any interest in entering Cairo's orbit, in associating itself with peoples who are culturally inferior and whose standard of living is far lower. Such a course would place an extra burden on them which would irremediably compromise their own economic development. But even if the responsible leaders understand this and intend to remain tied to the West, the political line of France clearly discourages them more and more and risks driving them, against their better judgment, into a situation in which they are cornered, forced to defend their very existence and oriented toward Cairo.

However, neither the United States nor the European powers can allow North Africa to fall under the direct or indirect influence of the Russians, or to slide into the neutralist position that characterizes the Middle East today. Up to now these nations have had confidence in France's ability to move along with the times and settle the Algerian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

problem wisely. But if we show ourselves definitively incapable of doing so, not one of our allies will be prepared to sacrifice Western influence in the North African Maghreb to our madness. It is clear now that Bourguiba is playing for everything; the risk of failure on his part is to lose all influence over his opponents in Tunisia.

Our differences with Tunisia take place today under the worst possible conditions. The bombardment of Sakiet lined up the entire world against us. Curiously enough, the reaction of the USSR, which hardly wants to see an increase in Western and particularly American influence in Algeria, is, for the moment, moderate and no effort to exert pressure against France has been made. We have 15,000 soldiers in Tunisia, confined to their barracks in various camps, and a French civilian population which daily has more to fear. On the heels of the airplane kidnapping of Ben Bella came the Meknes massacre. If similar events have thus far not taken place in Tunisia it is thanks to the wisdom and personal authority of Bourguiba, but a serious incident can always erupt from one moment to the next. Further, the port of Bizerte is blockaded and most probably lost to France for good. We now have no way to retaliate by force; the slightest violent gesture against Tunisia would only have the same repercussions as the expedition against Suez, and even in the event of a military success we would only have to back down shamefacedly.

Under these circumstances, what course is possible?

For the last several weeks a courageous about-face on France's part would still have enabled us to take the initiative in negotiations; by settling the Tunisian incident in good faith, by appealing to the good offices of the King of Morocco and Bourguiba, contact could have been established with the various elements of Algerian public opinion. Only Bourguiba and the King of Morocco can restore the predominance of the political elements over the military within the FLN; only they can bring to the fore other voices capable of making themselves heard. Both are interested in doing so because both want to create in the Maghreb a Moslem grouping which will be independent of Cairo, firmly allied to the West and even, if that is still possible, to France.

If an about face is not made quickly by France, mediation by the six nations of the European Community would be desirable as soon as possible. Their existence as well as that of France depends upon a solution of the Algerian problem. It is certainly strange that the self-styled pan-Europeans who were instrumental in creating the European Economic Community, who took part with Great Britain in the Suez expedition and who today accept the good offices of Great Britain and the United States, together with the United Europe movement which for two years insistently proclaimed the need for a common foreign policy among the six nations, have had nothing to say at the very moment when that foreign policy so urgently needs to be defined and activated. This is of special importance in the case of Bizerte. If France cannot hold on to Bizerte, it would be in her interest to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it placed under European control so as to remove it from any discussion between Russia and the United States.

If neither of these two steps is taken within the next few weeks, the Algerian problem will become an international problem and those who have offered their good offices will be forced to deal with it. If France refuses to accept this, the question will come up again before the Security Council where it will inevitably face Russian intervention which will, in turn, be confronted by the United States. The USSR will not, of course, allow Bizerte to come into the NATO organization without undertaking the defense of her own interests. Thus, internationalization of the problem will carry us by stages to a complete catastrophe, as was the case of the Netherlands in the Indonesian affair.

IN THE MEANTIME, a very grave situation is developing on the domestic scene. Our successive governments have whipped up the nation to a belligerent, nationalist mood by lying propaganda in the press and over the radio. The government is still carrying on its wild blustering, but sooner or later when it has been subjected to sufficient pressure, *it will capitulate completely.* In this way we are in danger of provoking a violent reaction by men who will see that they have been tricked and by soldiers who will become aware of having risked their lives for nothing; and, when America imposes a capitulation upon us, we will see arise throughout the country a wave of *anti-Americanism with fascist tendencies.* The working class, misled by the Communist party, has been constantly aroused against the Americans for several years now. Today the Communist party no longer has enough influence among the workers to make any spectacular last minute reversal and to become pro-American even if the United States were to offer a progressive, international and constructive solution. If the fascists unleash a new February 6, 1934 on Paris, there will be such a disturbance in the working class that there will be little chance of another February 12* with which to answer them.

We have no more than a few weeks left in which to take the initiative necessary to regain control of the situation. There was a time when the name of France shone incomparably in the world, when France was a great center of innovation and creativeness and when her vibrant imaginativeness enabled her to defend the essential values of humanity. By practicing an isolationist and ineffective national pride, France is today little by little degrading herself to the level of a ruined Spain. And meanwhile, quietly, Germany is on the ascendant. A unity of Europe will be achieved, inevitably, but it is in danger of being dominated by Germany, not at all, as some may fear, because that country is so strong, but because of the *suicide of France,* a France which ought instead to be the quickening inspiration of the United Europe now being created.

Translated by MIRIAM WASSERMAN

* On February 6, 1934, Colonel de la Roque led an armed fascist demonstration in Paris; on February 12, Socialist and Communist workers joined in a mass protest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REBELLIOUS ORGMEN & TAME INTELLECTUALS

Bernard Rosenberg

Omnivorousness is perhaps the most striking quality of corporate civilization. Every idea, like every thing and no matter what its origins, is swallowed, absorbed and reused. This condition was brought home to me recently by an acquaintance of mine who is employed on Madison Avenue. He was summoned one day last year to ply his peculiar trade ("Market Psychology") in the research division of a large company. The junior executive who had sent for him quickly explained that a big boss had just read two valuable books. One was *Personal Influence,* a sociological study of consumer habits by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz which might be expected to interest eggheads in business (some of them refer to it as *Personnel Influence).* Interest in the other book was a little more startling, for it was *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills.

What did the boss see in these two books? "Well, he tells me," said the young man, "that, according to Mills, a very few people in key positions do all the deciding about most public and private matters. And he says that it says in *Personal Influence* that there aren't more than a thousand opinion leaders in the United States. So the boss wants a list of those people!"

The notion was that if a thousand Influentials were known by name, they could be circularized and organized to pressure Congressmen for more sensible legislation—like a national "right to work" law and a more reasonable wages and hours act. The business point of view might, in this way, be properly represented by people who count and who by their example tell other people how to think and act.

My friend, hardly able to contain himself during the interview, believes that if he had earnestly recommended certain portions of *Capital* as firsthand material on the exploitation of labor, that too would have been given a serious hearing. And why not? When the bland are leading the bland, any resource may be tapped and converted.

Everyone in the know will tell you that Vance Packard's bestseller, *The Hidden Persuaders,* which was designed to scare people away from Motivation Research, has actually given that exotic enterprise a powerful shot in the arm. Packard himself tells of being approached by businessmen who never heard of MR before but are tremendously impressed by his description of a new technique for manipulating the masses. He has attempted to "expose" that technique, but they, undisturbed, want to use it for their own firms. Thanks to Packard, word has also spread that certain psychiatric findings can be and are profitably perverted. Now that Packard has interested himself in subliminal perception, which he regards as even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more diabolical than Motivation Research, we may be sure that it too will be well received.

Think what this means: C. Wright Mills set out to write an angry indictment of the irresponsible ruling class, and his analysis has the incidental and unintended effect of helping to crystalize class consciousness in the very group under indictment. The Power Elite becomes fortified with an even greater sense of solidarity than before *The Power Elite* appeared. Vance Packard, the moralist, works himself into a state of indignation over a serious threat to the human mind—and in spite of himself makes propaganda for what he most deplores.

The corporation's absorptive capacity is unlimited. Did Leon Trotsky write *The Permanent Revolution*? Was it the cornerstone of his work? Very well, then Fortune Magazine will give us *America: The Permanent Revolution*. Two years ago several of us listened with rapt attention to an erudite Commencement speaker the text of whose inspirational address was—*The Permanent Revolution*. A stickler for the rules of scholarship, he modestly disclaimed any originality, and credited the concept to—William Whyte. Not that it matters. If racists should gain the upper hand in this society they would straightway draw upon the tolerance literature that has been accumulating all these years and turn *it* upside down.

II

Recently William Whyte published a grim little morality tale called *The Organization Man* which sets many of our problems in proper focus. Nowhere more so than on page 177, for it is there that Whyte reports what happened after he wrote a satirical piece in *Fortune* with such a deliberately heavy hand that no one—except the American businessman—could take him seriously. His nom de plume was Otis Binet Stanford, the personification of mental measurement. Dr. Stanford playfully proposed the establishment of a Universal Card to be coded by electronic machines for all pertinent information about everybody. Political leanings, marital relations, credit ratings, personality test scores: nothing relevant would be omitted. All this was to be handled by a central organization staffed with competent coders, testers and tenders who would eventually "process" the entire population.

"With this tool," observed the mythical Dr. Stanford about his fictitious Card, "Organization could get full loyalty: if a man developed hostility he could not escape by leaving the organization. His card would be revoked and that would be that." Having said so much, Whyte grew fearful that his readers' mouths might be watering in unseemly fashion. So "lest readers get too excited, I made the end patently ridiculous: with the card, I said, society would be protected from people who questioned things and rocked the boat. For good measure there was a footnote indicating that the whole thing was a hoax." But then, who reads footnotes?

Some literal-minded editorialists took this spoof seriously, and objected to the idea. Others took the idea seriously and embraced it. Here is Whyte's account:

> Unfortunately, however, many who took it literally thought it was a splendid idea and *the net effect of the article on them was to embolden them to action*. The president of the country's largest statistical firm called in great excite-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ment to find out if anyone had yet started the central processing organization—*he said it was the sort of idea you kick yourself for not having thought of first.* His firm, he suggested, was just the right outfit on which to build the central unit. When I last heard from him he was on his way to see a testing outfit he might team up with. [Emphasis added.]

Nor was this all. The Universal Card which Whyte had dreamed up as part of a nightmare turned out to be no great novelty. He found that Western Electric already had an index system for its executives containing "Management Personnel Code Cards" with basic data on each man punched through a slick new machine. Who says we've lost our know-how? Sputnik-Mutnik. It's the peaceful use of technology here on earth and not in outer space that really matters.

William Whyte is sickened by what he sees around him almost as much as the average intellectual is heartened by what he sees: namely, the same thing. Indeed an extraordinary turnabout has taken place in our time. Former critics are commonly quiescent or jubilant. Leslie Fiedler speaks for them—and don't tell me that Fiedler's vision has been impaired; he just isn't very troubled by our society and wishes that others weren't either. In the Winter 1958 issue of *Midstream* Fiedler refers for the umpteenth time to a vestigial group of radicals who emphasize their "alienation" (a word which so greatly annoys him that he can't stop using it) and feel "an obligation to the attitudes of dissent which survives the ideological grounds for dissent." But Fiedler is suffering from a delusion: he seems to see (and in Montana, too) dissenters everywhere crying their "alienation" to the heavens, and sometimes I suspect that he counts editors of DISSENT while trying to go to sleep. But the number of dissenters *or* Dissenters in American intellectual life today is pitiably small; and if the ex-radicals didn't keep sourly kicking us while we're more or less down, we'd be even more obscure than we are. Apart from that minority of malcontents who are somehow unable to "get with it," most intellectuals are Accommodated Men. And as they are reduced to serenity, protests come not from the Academy or from politics but, curiously, from within business itself.

Murmurings have been discernible for some time from those who were sucked into the slimiest vortex of business. Presently their voices were raised in cries of anguish and pain which, when heard against the background of the intellectuals' dithyrambic recitation, produced a fine modern atonal effect. Out of the communications industry in which he had been immersed came Mr. Spectorsky to anatomize the exurb. From the mass circulation magazines, where he had labored faithfully, there emerges Mr. Packard, a journeyman reporter—not the old-fashioned highbrow muckraker—to hurl a bombshell on Madison Avenue. And William Whyte, every inch the executive, writes *The Organization Man* while on extended leave from *Fortune,* that svelte voice of big business.

Whyte expresses polite disgust on nearly every line of his book. He is revolted—but within circumspect limits. His rebellion, though real, is like most other forms of contemporary insurgency: it is for a variety of reasons hopelessly abortive. This corporate Jeremiah who flails us for allowing ourselves to be robbed by The Organ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ization of our autonomy and humanity must also deflate his argument by saying, lest we misunderstand, that, "I write with the optimistic premise that individualism is as possible in our times as in others . . . " and adds in case he hasn't made himself clear enough, "I speak of individualism *within* organization life."

Packard is quite as good an exemplar of abortive rebellion. He points out:

> . . . a great many advertising men, publicists, fund raisers, personnel experts, and political leaders, in fact numerically a majority, still do a straightforward job . . . Advertising, for example, not only plays a vital role in promoting our economic growth but is a colorful, diverting aspect of American life; and many of the creations of ad men are tasteful, honest works of artistry.

No more than the juvenile delinquent, the hophead, the cat, the hipster, can this kind of unfocussed rebel stop swatting flies and start draining swamps. It is beyond the apprehension of such men that a few hundred motivation researchers are simply a small saprophyte on the body of American advertising and that American advertising, while senseless, is merely a small and necessary part of the American economy. Does Packard care to criticize that economy? Such *lèse majesté* would be unthinkable. His is criticism within the system and not of the system—on par with a worker's letter to *Pravda* complaining about his plant manager. Niccolo Tucci captured the whole point long ago when he imagined a Soviet worker going to Stalin and saying, "I want you to remove my chains." Stalin replies, "Gladly, comrade. I will have a new set forged immediately." "But," says the worker, "I don't want any chains at all." At which Stalin exclaims, "You wrecker. You decadent hyena. You Western counter-revolutionary swine!"

III

Packard, like all good people, is most exercised about the presence of motivation research in politics. It is not cricket, he contends, to extend methods suitable for selling depilatories, soaps, toothpaste and deodorants to selling presidential candidates. Hucksters should not try to merchandise their products in the political arena; professional persuaders have no business treating Ike and Adlai like autos, bath salts and lawn mowers. Almost anyone who discovers that he has been manipulated into preferring a political Tweedledum over a Tweedledee who looks almost the same, can work himself into quite a lather over it. But, if he does so, our voter will lose sight of the principal fact that Packard discloses—and forgets. *The principal fact about advertising is that it must be used on a large scale because so many identical products with different brand names are poured on to the American market. The major function of advertising is to establish marginal differentiation—or the illusion of difference, when in fact there is no difference.* If all beers are pretty much alike, what you do in the beer business is get yourself an adman who will launch a multimillion dollar campaign to prove that your beer is better, that it is dry (like many other liquids), more aphrodisiacal or less fattening. As the two political parties become indistinguishable and the public begins to sense that they are so, Democratic and Republican leaders have no choice but to apply the special skills of ad alley. Only the experts really

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understand how to handle marginal differentiation.

Last year Daniel Bell struck a smart blow at advertising. Mr. Bell is labor editor of *Fortune* although we know him in many other roles as well. He remarked in *The New Leader* that the previous year more than ten billion dollars were spent on advertising in the U.S. A lot of money even in boom times, and all of it a waste and a bloody nuisance too, defacing the landscape and bombarding our eardrums. Wouldn't it be a good thing to abolish advertising? A socialist, and a liberal too, might be able to find some more constructive use to which such a sum could be put. But an ex-socialist has other fish to fry. Besides, he has a recommendation: if you don't like advertising, said Bell, turn a deaf ear to it. Given the ubiquity and circumambience, the sheer volume of it, this is of course just what we cannot do. There is no way of escaping commercial messages in a pecuniary culture. In a recent speech disparaging Thorstein Veblen ("I come not to praise Veblen but to bury him"—Bell has appointed himself a professional undertaker of famous radicals), Bell implied that in this land the consumer is king. Edouard Heimann, the economist who was a discussant that day, admitted that the consumer is king in our system, but he suggested that we reflect upon the nature of monarchy: usually the king is a man surrounded by courtiers and toadies who, through flattery, get him to do what they want. This seemed to me to be an appropriate image of the American consumer, but it did not prompt Bell to alter his own conception of regal power in the marketplace.

In our house there is a little girl who, when she is of two minds about something, expresses her ambivalence with an original portmanteau word. That word is "Nyes"—meaning no, but yes, after all, yes. The articulate and experienced but abortive rebel, by contrast with his tongue-tied adolescent brother, knows that something is wrong, that unbearable pressures are being brought into play. He is even moved to denounce them—and then quickly, if not tropismatically, to withdraw from their implications. Thus his brave negation—and this holds for Whyte, Packard and the rest—is smothered in a much more strident and repetitive "Yes." This odd discourse which ultimately produces a kind of speech pathology amounting to strangulation conveys the full measure of a deep commitment to everything that the new rebel genuinely abhors.

Bell recommends that we ignore advertising; Whyte advises the Organization Man to cheat on personality tests; Spectorsky limits himself to exurbia as if it were an isolated enclave rather than the quintessence of modern American life; and Packard is aggrieved only about a handful of ostensibly villainous psychologists. All recoil once they peer deeply into the abyss, and no one can blame them for averting their gaze. If the criticism they write dribbles off into inconsequence and offers gimmicks instead of solutions, we should not complain too harshly. For we have already been sufficiently rewarded by an abundance of insight from men who have gone farther than anyone could have expected but who are incapable of taking yet another step.

Even onanistic insight from the bitter and disgruntled representatives of business should be welcome. They have spilled their seed on barren ground for long enough. Business

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taught us better than we knew that insight is a many-splintered thing which can be put together in defense of any ideology. I wish quite simply to propose that we reverse the process described earlier in this article: they have picked our brains, used our ideas, taken our insights, and all too often bought us out whether we were ready to sell or not. There were plenty of romantic capitulators, but even the intransigent intellectuals were likely to be swallowed up by a corporate organism ravenous for ideas. Now it is from *within* business that our corrupt civilization is being criticized most mercilessly. The meaning of this critique and of its frustrated authors is ours to exploit. Their insights should be put to use in the name of socialist humanism, which is where they ought to have originated in the first place.

Once it was the radical who felt frustrated because he could not apply his principles in the real world; today the sensitive executive squirms in an identical state of discomfort. His prototype is the Marquis de Sade as described by Albert Camus in *The Rebel*: a man who starts out as Prometheus and ends up as Onan. Let us as Dissenters offer him a better fate, and first of all by showing him the consequences of his own insights.

Not to forget that silence...

I cannot live as person without my art. And yet I have never set that art above everything else. It is essential to me, on the contrary, because it excludes no one and allows me to live, just as I am, on a footing with all. To me art is not a solitary delight. It is a means of stirring the greatest number of men by providing them with a privileged image of our common joys and woes. Hence it forces the artist not to isolate himself; it subjects him to the humblest and most universal truth. And the man who, as often happens, chose the path of art because he was aware of his difference soon learns that he can nourish his art, and his difference, solely by admitting his resemblance to all. The artist fashions himself in that ceaseless oscillation from himself to others, midway between the beauty he cannot do without and the community from which he cannot tear himself. This is why true artists scorn nothing. They force themselves to understand instead of judging. And if they are to take sides in this world, they can do so only with a society in which, according to Nietzsche's profound words, the judge will yield to the creator, whether he be a worker or an intellectual.

By the same token, the writer's function is not without arduous duties. By definition, he cannot serve today those who make history; he must serve those who are subject to it. Otherwise he is alone and deprived of his art. All the armies of tyranny with their millions of men cannot people his solitude —even, and especially, if he is willing to fall into step with them. But the silence of an unknown prisoner subjected to humiliations at the other end of the world is enough to tear the writer from exile, every time at least that he manages, amid the privileges of freedom, not to forget that silence, but to relieve it, making it re-echo by means of art.

— From the speech of acceptance by Albert Camus upon the award of the Nobel Prize for literature. December 10, 1957. *Translated by Justin O'Brien.* *Copywright* 1958 *by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. and reprinted with permission.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poland remains one of the political storm-centers of the world. In recent months the "revisionist" intellectuals—those who wished the country to move further along the road to a democratic form of socialism—have suffered blows from the Gomulka regime, which, for its part, has tried to reconsolidate the power of the Polish Communist Party.

One of the intellectual leaders of the "revisionists" is a brilliant young writer named Leszek Kolakowski whose "Responsibility and History," a series of articles appearing in the weekly Nowa Kultura, *provided a fundamental critique of the outlook of ruling powers in Poland. We print here a section of that series, in the translation of the magazine* East Europe. *It might be noted that the "Revolutionary" who appears in his dialogue is actually a Communist functionary and that the "Intellectual" speaks for those young Polish Communists who have become disillusioned with the whole authoritarian outlook and wish to find their way to a democratic socialist ethos.*

Together with Kolakowski's article we print an authoritative report by Leopold Labedz, a student of Polish affairs, on the fate of Po Prostu, *the remarkable paper of the Warsaw students which led in the struggle for freedom and has recently been suppressed by the Gomulka regime.*

RESPONSIBILITY AND HISTORY

Leszek Kolakowski

"You say," says the Intellectual to his opponent, the Revolutionary, "that at a certain historical moment the specific interest of the working class becomes completely identified with the interests of all of mankind and not only preserves human values but is the only force capable of saving them. But what proofs do you have for this assertion, apart from a vague historico-philosophic speculation? What right do I have, in the name of that speculative dialectic of the future, to renounce at present the highest values of human existence? And experience so far does not confirm your optimism—on the contrary, it shows that this specific interest, as you understand it, is often realized contrary to all human values. And here are examples... The first, the second, the thousandth....

"If you represent a certain historical reality, on what basis do you ask me to affirm it morally? Just because it is a reality? I will not support any form of historical existence solely because somebody persuades me that it is unavoidable—even if I believed in its unavoidability, for which at present there is no evidence. If crime is the law of history, is the realization of this law reason for me to become a criminal? Why should that be so? You do not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

let me measure your moves with a measuring rod of absolute values because, in your opinion, such values either do not exist at all or are purely imagined. But on the other hand, you yourselves talk about human values which must be absolute; thus, silently, you introduce into your doctrine axiomatic absolutism in a vague and equivocal way in order to destroy it immediately with equally equivocal 'historical relativism.' With this package you come to me demanding that I should immediately renounce all the highest creations of human culture because your doctrine promises to return them to me intact after an indefinite period of time.

"Therefore, you demand for your own historical philosophy and your own history unlimited moral credit although at every step they both unmask their insolvency. You, who rashly agree to give up everything to the Moloch of current reality in the unjustified hope of having it returned—you do not voice a philosophy of responsibility; he who really wants to be responsible for the treasures which human history has discovered will defend them at all costs—i.e., also at the cost of separating himself from the chaos of current struggle if they can be preserved only outside the battlefield."

"But it is noteworthy," the Revolutionary remarks at this point, "that you know how to save these eternal values only together with your own person. It is also strange that, doubting my historical ground, you do not notice at all the direction at which the other side of history is aiming, of whose existence there is no doubt. Pyres of books are on fire there. What did you do to save them? Do you think it will be enough if you yourself learn them by heart? There, intestines are torn from bellies and faces are trampled by heavy boots. What did you do to prevent this? Perhaps you think that you will achieve something with your sermons about universal love, preached to fully armed soldiers? That you will extinguish fire by repeating the ten commandments?"

THE INTELLECTUAL ANSWERS:

"Pyres are burning on both sides of Mount Sinai. Do you want me to count them to compute your moral superiority? It would be a miserable victory. You constantly tell me that the threat to human freedom is so huge that, in order to overcome it, it is worth while to give up freedom; you constantly repeat to me the slogan of Saint-Just: There is no freedom for the enemies of freedom. To a certain extent, I am ready to agree. But I must know who determines the division of men into enemies of freedom and defenders of it. Always somebody who considers himself in one of the camps, i.e., somebody who in a trial is simultaneously a litigant, judge, prosecutor and policeman, all in one person. My commitment, to which I am constantly forced, must therefore be based on absolute confidence in that man, in his present and his future intentions. That is, I am supposed to have a total confidence in him which I can hardly have in myself. On what basis could I afford an act of that total confidence towards men who in a conflict in which they are among the litigants always want to be the judges too —that is, to deny the eternal and most elementary principle of justice—and who never agree that the controversy between them and their enemies should be resolved by anybody but themselves? And nevertheless a judge, if he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is to pronounce one of the sides right, in accordance with justice, must be impartial before he comes to court; that is, he fulfills his functions properly only when he uses the same measuring rod of abstract justice on the arguments of each of the participants in the controversy. You, however, refuse me this right, maintaining that I must first be on your side in order to judge justly, that is, that I have a right to be judge only when at the same time I am a participant in the trial.

"It is true that you have a separate theory to justify this abhorrent rule, namely, the theory of the non-existence of a third force in a society torn by class antagonisms, i.e., a theory according to which the office of the judge in the interpretation of modern legislation is entirely impossible. You consider your theory to be obvious and you ask me to recognize it, and you add that by the very fact of rejecting this theory, by the very wish to take the position of judge in the controversy, I automatically place myself in the camp of your opponents. In other words, if I recognize the possibility of the existence of a third force I am immediately clasisfied by you as an antagonist and as such morally deprived of the right to judge your arguments—because then I am a participant in the trial. I can avoid this only when I recognize the theory of the non-existence of a third force and accept your point of view. I have a right to judge and understand you only when I am one of you.

"Don't you see that in this way you use the same arguments that were used by Soren Kierkegaard in defense of Christianity, saying that in order to understand Christianity it is first necessary to accept it? You also say the same thing: In order to understand you it is first necessary to accept your arguments. You must see that this is a demand that is unacceptable to any reasonable person, because reason, among other things, consists of refraining from choice until the arguments have been weighed. Your postulate, on the other hand, requires me to accept your arguments before granting me the right to investigate them, and it is, therefore, a manifestation of total irrationalism, against which I am warned by the whole experience of European culture. I do not deny that with such methods of action you may win many followers, but realize that you can never win them by intellectual means; your position is completely opaque, it is impenetrable to rational thought because it rejects *a priori* any criticism as an act which, by the nature of things, is hostile to you and is of necessity—consciously or unconsciously—taken from the position of the opposite camp. Your theory of the non-existence of the third force is therefore basically irrational and unacceptable to sensible beings.

"And if you say that I protect the unchanging values of culture, ridiculed by you, together with my own person, and if for this reason you want to unmask me before my audience as an aesthete in love with himself, my answer is: I have no intention of becoming a scoundrel solely in order to demonstrate that I do not care whether I am thought of as a decent man."

In turn, the Revolutionary answers: "Your defense is your indictment."

"I do not defend myself," interrupts the Intellectual. "Why does the world, for you, invariably consist of prosecutors and accused?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I did not invent that world," the Revolutionary continues. "One should be able to face its horrors and not lament over them. You accuse us, revolutionaries, of dividing reality into two sides and demanding engagement on one and only one side. This is as senseless as accusing meteorologists of causing hail and wind storms. The whole history of mankind is proof of our arguments. The second proof is the *de facto* effectiveness of our social action conducted on the basis of such an interpretation of conditions."

"History proves everything that is previously put into it by the historian," replies the Intellectual. "You analyze history, approaching it with a ready-made scheme, and at the end of the study you announce triumphantly that the same scheme emerged from your analysis—forgetting to add that you yourselves put it there first. And the practical effectiveness of this interpretation of the world has not been proved. How far this or that movement is really historically effective can be evaluated only when its era has passed, only *ex post*. Maintaining that you, for the first time in history, are free from limitations which are imposed on man's perspective by his era, you fall victim to the same mystification which you rightly notice about your predecessors."

The Revolutionary laughs mockingly: *"In qua mensura mensis fueritis, remetietur vobis."** You're trying to say that we boast of our own alleged freedom from historical limitations while you yourself are really free from them. After all, it is you who maintains that you control the world of eternal values, transcending history and free from its pressure. We, on the other hand, have a clear realization of the relativity of values—what is more, we are the only ones really to possess the skill of historical thinking which permits us also to watch the present in its constant passage."

"I KNOW," answers the Intellectual, "that you voice the general principle of historicity, but I do not notice that you practice it. I would not accuse you of this and of inconsistency in general if you accepted my assumption as an alternative possibility—the recognition of values which under no circumstances can be erased and the negation of which is an evil in any situation. But you act differently. Your relativity is masked by appearances of fictitious immutability. You have values which essentially change every day and which are pronounced every day as final. This is the worst form of relativity because it buries both historical thinking—the use of which I do not deny—and the unchanging and lasting human achievements. It is a strange cult that professes monotheism but which daily changes the god which is the object of the cult.

"You must notice that we are waging a peculiar discussion. It mirrors quite exactly the fictitious conversation between Carnot* and Lavoisier,** recorded by Romain Rolland. A certain naivete, easily noticeable in that drama, does not conceal the analogy from me. Carnot demands from his interlocutor approval for sacrificing the present for the future. Lavoisier answers that to sacrifice truth, respect for oneself and all human values for the future—means to sacrifice the fu-

* "For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; *and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" (Matthew VII, 2.)

* French statesman and general (1753-1823).

** French chemist (1743-1794) executed during the French Revolution.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture. I cannot disagree with him. Lacking your faith, as optimistic as it is empty-worded, as to the foreseeability of future things, I cannot know what future results will follow from our present actions. Therefore, I do not agree that great moral and intellectual values should be sacrificed on the altar of objectives the outcome of which is in doubt. On the other hand, I know that, on the contrary, the measures used necessarily imprint a mark on the ultimate outcomes."

"You succumb to deceptive pictures which liberal politicians always paint about the revolutionary movement in order to denigrate it," replies the Revolutionary. "Our doctrine does not leave the whole present to be devoured. The present makes immediate use of the revolution, and thanks to this it is possible to arrange it so that all its possibilities are not exploited but some are renounced for the sake of greater future results. And all the measures which make you so indignant are always a defense against a greater evil. Remember that in politics, a choice between two evils is more common than a choice between absolute good and evil. This is a premise of the present which was not created by either of us."

"I WILL NEVER BELIEVE," says the Intelectual, "that the moral and intellectual life of mankind should conform to the laws of economic investment, that is, that one should expect better results tomorrow by saving today, i.e., use lies for the triumph of truth and take advantage of crime in order to pave the way for nobility. I know that often it is necessary to choose between two evils. But when both possibilities are to a large extent evil, I will do everything to refrain from choosing. In this way, I also choose something, if only man's right to his own evaluation of the situation in which he finds himself. This is not so very little."

"But nevertheless, returning to your example, history made Carnot right," [said the Revolutionary].

"I did not notice that," [said the Intellectual].

"In such a case, the condition of any further conversation is to interpret again the whole history of the world, which cannot be done, especially if we are waiting for a choice which must be made right away, about the completion of this task," [said the Revolutionary].

"It seems that this is to the point. If we are forced to take some immediate attitude to current changes, then we cannot, of course, wait for the uncertain results of historico-philosophical discussions which may remain unresolved for a hundred years. Therefore, our choice will always be best if it is determined by that small particle of certainty which we possess. Lasting moral values, elaborated in the long development of man up to this moment, are the surest support we have if reality demands from us a choice which, ultimately, is also of moral character. In any case, they are more worthy of confidence than any historical science. And this is the reason why, ultimately, I stick to my opinion," [said the Intellectual].

"Whatever happens?"

"Whatever happens."

NOTE: This article is reprinted, with permission, from *East Europe*, a monthly review of East European affairs.—The Editors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLAND: THE EVASION OF FREEDOM

Leopold Labedz

I

"What has changed in Poland since October? Gomulka has changed." This joke, circulating in Warsaw a year and a half after the Polish "spring in October," is characteristic of the current mood of disenchantment.

Polish intellectuals who were in the forefront of the revolt are now subject to censorship and administrative pressure. The pattern is familiar. In France the Revolution devoured its children, in Soviet Russia the children of the Revolution devoured their parents, and in Poland the old *apparatchiki* are regaining lost ground from the young intellectuals who formed the vanguard of rebellion against their rule.

What did happen in Poland in October 1956? A revolution or a revolt?

A week after the upheaval, writing in the courageous student *Po Prostu,* which became the intellectual spearhead of the "revisionist" democrats and quickly attained a circulation of 150,000 copies, E. Lasota and R. Turski answered the question: "What has happened in our country? It must be stated in plain and simple language that a revolution has occurred."

A year later, on October 2, 1957 *Po Prostu* was closed down and two weeks after that, Lasota, Turski and other members of its editorial board were expelled from the Polish Communist Party. *Trybuna Ludu,* the official Party paper, in an editorial on November 4, 1957, categorically declared: "In October 1956 our Party did *not* proclaim a new revolution."

What really happened was that, while the revolution was proclaimed, it did not, in fact, occur. The danger of Soviet intervention prevented the revolt from becoming a revolution.

Carried along by the pre-October momentum, the young revisionist intellectuals continued to press for radical changes, but they soon realized that the wave was receding, that "consolidation" would mean something quite different from what they had envisaged. But they were not disillusioned. They appreciated the changes that had occurred: the end of terror and the new freedom of thought (though not of speech); they thought of themselves, in this new situation, as a ginger group pressing for radical improvements in various fields. One of the most prominent among them, Leszek Kolakowski, expressed the mood of the moment in the introduction to his book of essays, *Philosophy and Daily Life*: "The Great Crisis has revolutionized political and philosophical consciousness to a point where hope is changing into doubt but not into hopelessness."

The idea of withdrawal from political activity, of "internal emigration,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was resolutely rejected by the young writers. They were aware of the implicit restrictions imposed by geography and they were ready for compromise and a more empirical approach to politics. On May Day 1957 *Po Prostu* declared: "Our fate depends primarily on ourselves. On us, the sad, the work-weary, the thoughtful and the impatient. On our attitude and our further effort." But by now the attacks on "revisionism" had begun. The official formula was to attack Stalinist "dogmatism" and liberal "revisionism" simultaneously, but in practice the offensive was concentrated against the latter.

The "revisionists" found themselves in a difficult situation. Many of them had almost completely abandoned doctrinal positions; but publicly they had to pay tribute to such old fetishes as the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and the "Leninist unity of the Party." Their defense necessarily had to rest on arguments within an intellectual framework they no longer accepted but which they were not free to discard. Galileo, to defend himself, had to demonstrate that his thesis did not contradict Biblical texts. The arguments of the "revisionists" had similarly to be free from doctrinal blasphemy. They argued that there are two kinds of revisionism:

> According to the first kind, the democratic rights of citizens should not be suppressed or curtailed in any circumstances. Philosophy, science, or literature should not be interfered with on any grounds. The followers of this kind of revisionism no longer believe in Orwellian catchwords that "war is peace" and "slavery is freedom." They think that a war is a war, and slavery cannot lead to freedom, but only to greater slavery. The followers of the second kind of revisionism still live in a world of sophistry . . . The first kind of revisionism means socialism or creative anxiety. The first kind is the strenght of our revolution. The second can only lead to its defeat (K. T. Toeplitz, *Nowa Kultura*, 28 April 1957).

II

In Poland, the first sign of a counter-offensive against the revisionists and against intellectual freedom was the appearance of a new weekly, *Polityka*. This was necessary because all the existing cultural periodicals, such as *Po Prostu, Przeglad Kulturalny, Nowa Kultura* and others, had become infected with heresy long before "October." *Polityka* was edited by the Minister of Higher Education, Zolkiewski, with the help of other ex-Stalinist intellectuals such as Putrament and Rakowski, who had jumped on the "October" band-wagon and were now eager to develop the ideology of "Gomulkaism," an ideology without any previous existence.

Polityka came into violent conflict with *Po Prostu*, castigating it for its "negative" attitude. Its "centrist" line representing the official attitude of the Gomulka leadership, it often voiced the resentment of the disgruntled Party functionaries, for whom October had represented a threat to their position, privileges, and power.

Gomulka, after the defeat of the Natolin group of die-hard Stalinists, was bent on appeasing the Party functionaries, whose sympathies were fundamentally not on his side but could be won by concessions. The revisionists now became his chief obstacle, since they, having helped to destroy the old orthodoxy, refused to accept a new one. After October *Po Prostu* realized the limitations arising from Poland's geographical situation and therefore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soft-pedalled its political revisionism and theoretical debunking; its reflection of the ideological ferment, hitherto bold and sharp, was toned down. It was ready to observe certain taboos dictated by the post-Hungarian situation: no criticism of Soviet "friends," no references to Hungary or other delicate subjects. No longer were there such outspoken comments in its columns as L. Kolakowski's reflection: "When Communists are pushed to crimes they become criminals; they may help to maintain power based on fear and lies but they cannot help to build socialism" *(ibid).*

Po Prostu shifted to internal problems of a more humdrum nature. It inaugurated a series of investigations into the seamy sides of Polish life. It dealt with the corruption of local officials, the abuse of power by provincial bosses, economic waste, cultural obscurantism. These tactics, though apparently safe ideologically, did not endear *Po Prostu* to the Party apparatus or, for that matter, to Gomulka, who wanted to consolidate his hold over it. Besides, attacks on Polish revisionists were steadily mounting in the Soviet press. Moscow, which for the time being abandoned the Natolin group, was gently pushing Gomulka towards the suppression of "revisionism." The young *enragés* were thus a constant source of embarrassment to the Party leader in his dealings with the powerful "protector." The intellectuals themselves realized the difficulties besetting Gomulka's balancing act as controls within the Soviet bloc were tightened, but they also felt that it could easily lead down the slippery slope of totalitarian reconsolidation, rather than to the "socialist reformation" or "humane socialism" which they desired. Thus the problem was not so much the compromise itself, as where to draw the line.

Meanwhile Gomulka grew franker in his hostility to the revisionists. At a meeting with the Zeran auto workers in the fall of 1957 he accused *Po Prostu* of blackening the socialist achievements and failing to follow the Party line. A year before, as it happened, in his first speech after assuming power, Gomulka had himself painted such a black picture of the Polish economy that some Western analysts were inclined to think it deliberately exaggerated for political reasons.

III

The post-October regime was seen as an obviously transitory stage, the result of a "negative equation." Everyone concerned realized that it had to be accepted as a necessary compromise. There was no immediate alternative. The Soviet leaders could not risk another Hungary, and the Polish people did not want to risk it either.

The first retrograde step was taken in the elections to the Seym. The resolution of the VIII Plenum of the Polish CP which brought Gomulka to power proclaimed that the Seym should become "an effective instrument of control by the people over the activity of the Government and the State administration." A change of such dimensions could hardly begin by subsituting a plebiscite for the proposed limited elections, yet that was precisely what Gomulka proposed to do. He appealed to the electorate not to use the restricted freedom of choice between the few selected candidates (previously approved by the Party) that had been granted under the electoral arrangements made in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the first flush of October. To show individual preferences for 5 out of 8 candidates in a constituency was, he argued, tantamount to "crossing Poland off the map of Europe." The Hungarian tragedy naturally aroused such fears in Poland that it was possible to represent the voluntary abandonment of a limited right as necessary for "reasons of State."

Gomulka was both at the parting of the ways and in a paradoxical situation. Though acclaimed from right to left as the "man of Providence," he had no political force behind him. Nor had Gomulka changed; he remained the Titoist he used to be before his arrest. He wanted to rule through a monopolistic but "sovereign" Party. Facing a situation in which the Party had ceased to exist as a unified force, he decided to reconsolidate it under his leadership. But even the limited freedom of choice left to the population clashed with this postulate, and could only add to the internal Party divisions. Gomulka made his choice. Having defied the Soviet leaders and persuaded them to accept Poland's limited independence, he decided that the next step was to win over the largely antagonistic Party apparatus. Ever since, *raison d'etat* has become a semi-official shibboleth to cover up all Gomulka's political actions, including many which were clearly due to internal expediency.

Tito drew the line when Djilas proposed to legalize a socialist opposition, Gomulka—when the "⅝ election" might have been taken as a first step away from the single party state. However, the Titoist objectives of "sovereignty - cum - monolithic - party" are more difficult to achieve in Poland than in Yugoslavia.

Polish geography is different, the Polish Party was sharply divided and the change in its leadership came as a result of a popular revolt against the regime. The Party apparatus in Poland did not rally around a national hero like Tito. The leaders of the Natolin group, Mijal, Klosiewicz, Witaszewski, Mazur, Lapot could not be dealt with as quickly and effectively as their equivalents in Yugoslavia. And last but not least, economic and social instability resulting from the relaxation of the hold of the state over society, was accompanied by a wave of absenteeism in industry, and by increased alcoholism and juvenile delinquency. The previous system of incentives, based in part on terror, ceased to operate and a new one had not yet been devised. Corruption, previously hidden, was now flagrant. The sociologist J. Szczepanski attributed the breakdown of social discipline and morale in part to the atomization of social groups and voluntary associations enforced by a totalitarian state.

But social and economic reform, widely debated, was slow in coming. The two connected themes of reform were the role of workers' councils and the so-called "new economic model" making greater use of the price mechanism. Gomulka accepted spontaneous decollectivization and released the peasants from some of the compulsory deliveries. This new agricultural policy brought immediate results, but there was no new, consistent, over-all economic policy. The entrenched vested interests of the economic bureaucracy prevented the acceptance of the fairly far-reaching proposals of the revisionist economists. The power of the workers' councils was gradually reduced. The workers in any case were more interested in wage in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creases than in industrial self-government. Despite the fears of inflation, Gomulka granted them more wage increases than he originally said was possible, but he dealt firmly with all spontaneous strikes. The Catholic church, which gave Gomulka tacit support, received in return several concessions, including the opportunity to organize religious education in schools.

And as the revolutionary wave receded, it was the "revisionist" students and intellectuals who, among all the pressure groups, were the easiest target.

IV

From the beginning Gomulka displayed no great sympathy towards the intellectuals. This was due not only to his personal background, but primarily to the fact that the revolutionary intelligentsia which helped bring him to power on the pre-October wave of popular discontent, constituted an obstacle to his project of dictatorship through a reconsolidated Party.

The tightening of the press censorship began in March 1957. *Po Prostu* suffered most. More than 50% of the contents of each number was suppressed, and several of its surveys stopped. Though the tone of the paper changed little, pressure kept mounting and the editors decided to suspend its publication for the "vacation period," and to devote this time to a discussion of editorial policy.

The first number of *Po Prostu* after the interval, prepared for 21 September, was held up by the censor. The rewritten issue was still considered too critical, and it was suppressed.

Justifying the ban, the Party Secretariat said that *Po Prostu* "denied the policy of the Party and Government." The October 1957 number of a bulletin for Party activists gave more specific reasons:

> During the existence of the paper, nothing positive was ever written about the USSR or any other socialist country . . . [on the contrary] the paper tried to publish long articles which would have ruined our good relations with the USSR and other brotherly countries and parties, had it not been stopped by the Press Office. S. Kurowski's leading article in the censored September issue revealed the true face of the paper.

The offending article, which the editors agreed to withdraw, dealt with the unfulfilled hopes of the "Polish October." It enumerated them one by one and punctuated each with an ironical comment that it was not implemented for "reasons of state."

The proscription of *Po Prostu* was followed by a spate of articles denouncing its stand. The statement by the Party Secretariat said that it had "descended to a position of barren negation and presented the political and economic realities of the country in a false light . . . " The official Party organ, *Tribuna Ludu* (5 October 1957), decribed its articles as "a complete negation of the 13-year achievements of the Polish People's Republic and an apologia for the capitalist West."

When the anniversary of the "spring in October" arrived, it passed by quietly, with neither festivities nor parades. The regime which had emerged from October preferred not to celebrate its first birthday; instead there was a requiem for *Po Prostu*.

The students who protested against the closing of *Po Prostu* were beaten by the police, their posters demanding freedom of the press torn down; some of the arrested students were sentenced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to terms of imprisonment ranging from eighteen months to three years.

Now three times as many as before the war (130,000 compared with 43,000 in 1938), the students are thus likely to become alienated again. Their mood and opinions were well expressed in *Po Prostu,* and they are bound to feel disillusioned. Whether they may remain idealistic or become cynical, Gomulka's influence among them is bound to decline.

The workers, who so strongly supported the students in October 1956, displayed little concern about the fate of *Po Prostu.* Student delegates met with indifference in factories. Party propagandists persuaded the workers that political unrest interfered with Gomulka's attempts to solve their bread-and-butter problems. Only the workers of the Zeran and Kasprzak factories, who together with students from the Warsaw Polytechnic, provided the main support for Gomulka a year earlier, refused to join in the anti-student campaign. Gozdzik, the "hero of October" and secretary of the Party cell in Zeran, refused to sign the statement condemning the students, with whom he had been in such close contact during the October days.

V

Polish intellectuals, who were the second source of the "spring in October," have also undergone a disillusioning experience. At first the intensification of censorship affected mostly the journalists. After the closing of *Po Prostu,* the writers also began to feel the pinch. The literary freedom they have enjoyed for the past year is threatened; certain ominous signs indicate what Gomulka meant when he said that "Poland does not intend to close the wide-open doors of democratic freedom but it must watch these doors better than in the past." The first action of the "watchman state" was to tighten the Post Office censorship of foreign, including literary, publications. Soon after the closing of *Po Prostu,* the censor confiscated the first number of the new literary monthly, *Europa,* its editorial board was dismissed and the periodical itself closed. Intended as a link with the Western cultural scene, the stillborn *Europa* was considered "dangerous," like *Po Prostu.* The subversive material by Western writers to be published in the first number consisted of articles by Stephen Spender on poetry, Dwight MacDonald on the British press, and Elia Kazan on the cinema.

As a protest against the decision to close *Europa* the members of its editorial board, Andrzejewski, Jastrun, Zulawski and Wazyk (author of the *Poem for Adults*), resigned from the Party. Jan Kott, the literary critic who, together with K. T. Toeplitz, was largely responsible for destroying the theory (and practice) of "socialist realism" in Poland, also gave up Party membership.

Almost at the same time as the suppression of *Europa,* the play based on the book by its editor, Jerzy Anrzejewski, was taken off the stage. Its theme is the mechanism of total power as exercised by Torquemada through the Holy Inquisition. Although the subject is treated historically, the transparent analogy was not lost on its audiences.

New literary works still reflecting the pre-October literary ferment coincide with the political regression since October, an example of the time lag between life and its reflection in literature. The Party, however, is already taking precautionary steps on the cultural front. Discredited and defeated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before October on the issue of Party interference in literature, art, and science, it is now trying to reassert its position, albeit a little shamefacedly. The Party theoretician Schaff announced that although "freedom of inquiry" is guaranteed by the new policy, intellctual freedom is "not identical with liquidation of a definite cultural policy." Schaff has equated revisionism with "social-democratism" and rejected the idea that it is best to leave cultural and scientific problems to the writers, artists, and scientists themselves. The Party cannot allow "a camouflaged struggle against the policy of socialism to be carried on under the cloak of an alleged struggle for the freedom of spiritual creativity.... True freedom for science depends on a clear and effective cultural policy of the Party.... The absence of such a policy is not democracy and only leads to anarchy."

To end such "anarchy," the Party is creating permanent commissions for control of science, culture, and education, similar to earlier departments abolished after October. Schaff assures his readers that these new commissions will not exhibit a "bureaucratic and dogmatic approach to creative work." But these assurances of the chief dialectical acrobat of the regime are accompanied by such ominous signs as the nomination for head of one commission of Leon Kruczkowski, the Stalinist ex-chief of the Polish Writers' Union. A new poem by Adam Wazyk indirectly comments on this new situation. Wazyk, who ended his *Poem for Adults* with an assurance that things will be rectified "through the Party," now, having left it, writes about people who "came out of madness but are still insane," and reflects on "Time which heals wounds and transforms ideas into the instruments of others."

In the meantime the campaign against "revisionism" in the Soviet and satellite press is gaining momentum. F. Konstantinov, the head of Agitprop, wrote in an article in *Pravda* (February 5, 1958) that "what Nagy did in Hungary in practice and in politics is being done by the Kolakowskis in theory." In a diplomatic response Gomulka told the correspondent of the *Times* that "the so-called revisionist movement was false and belonged to the past. It was never strong in our country, and is now disappearing." To accelerate that process Schaff proposes to launch a Party campaign using familiar methods:

> What are we to do in our situation "to catch the wind in our sails"...? We need two elements for this purpose: an appropriate organization, and people who are capable of putting the ideologcial offensive into operation. It is, first of all, necessary to mobilize 30-40 talented "pens" on the Party line, to outline the line of attack, to assign people to deal with particular problems, and to give deadlines and order them to write. I guarantee results... (*Polityka,* February 9, 1958).

It is not surprising to read the poetical verdict on October by Wazyk, summarizing the disappointed hopes:

It was only a small fire in the laundry,
The fireman came, and promptly put
it down ...

VI

In order to consolidate the Party, Gomulka decided on a purge. Officially the categories affected by the "verification" are to be the "dogmatists" and the "revisionists." "It is clear," wrote the weekly, *Swiat* (3 Nov. 1957), "that no party is capable of action if it covers such an ideological span." Accordingly the wings had to be clip-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ped to enable the Party to fly without them. Apart from deviationists, the members to be eliminated are those who joined the Party for private benefit, careerists, "clericals", and so on. But the commissions of Party control were neither inclined nor able to apply strictly all these criteria. If they did, hardly any members would be left, apart from Gomulka and his immediate entourage. The number of members eliminated so far is 150,000, out of a total membership of 1,283,000. In practice the purge may not fulfill expectations. The political strife within the Party may not be eliminated; but a new problem will perhaps be created by the mass of expelled members (some of them politically-minded) who will not be threatened by the consequences of the Stalinist purges. One of Gomulka's purposes may be achieved, the liberal-minded intelligentsia may be cut off from the "masses"; but his own dependence on the Party apparatus will surely also increase. Hence the schizophrenic mood displayed in *Trybuna Ludu,* one day lamenting the high proportion of intelligentsia in the Party, and another, issuing warnings against "the anti-intelligentsia tendencies within the Party."

It may seem paradoxical that those who were most active in the revolt are the most vulnerable after it has partly succeeded, while those who were least active and stood aside benefited most. The revisionists, the writers, the students, became a relatively easy target for attacks from the reconsolidated Party machine; their strength largely evaporated because of the general apathy of the population which, fearing Soviet intervention, reverted to an apolitical mood. By contrast, the peasantry, the Catholic church, and petty bourgeois "private initiative" all received important concessions which have so far been preserved. Their social weight or organizational strength makes them more formidable opponents and Gomulka was careful not to antagonize them, even though the long term costs of antagonizing the youth and intelligentsia may still have to be assessed.

The mood that is now spreading even in political opposition tendencies may be compared to the one which arose after the failure of the Polish national uprising of 1863. It is a positivistic attitude of "organic work" reminiscent of the program then recommended to the emergent Polish middle class and urbanized nobility. This mood contrasts with the previous "existentialist" attitude of exasperated Polish youth. But the *Zeitgeist* affects various generations: just as, before October, "existentialist" despair gave some courage to the middle-aged intellectuals, so now the positivistic *nil desperandum* influences the younger generation. Just as after the defeated uprising, so after the frustrated revolt, the resulting mixture of political empiricism and hopefulness may help to preserve the spirit of revolt despite the fact that in the short run it will probably succumb to the reconsolidated Party rule. Such a reconsolidation, however reprehensible certain features of it may be, cannot mean a return to the previous conditions. In the future any ferment will have an incomparably easier starting point than that which originated the pattern of anti-totalitarian revolt before October. The young elements of the population cannot be induced to accept another version of "numb speech." Gomulka, unlike Tito, has to face a more articulated society reactivated by the revolutionary process which brought him to power.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The following is an excerpt from Joseph Buttinger's newly published work, The Smaller Dragon, *a political History of Vietnam. It is taken from the book's fifth chapter, which gives a detailed analysis of Vietnamese Mandarin society as it existed before the conquest of Indochina by France. These pages reveal—to our knowledge for the first time—a curious and probably unique feature in the development of society, to which we would like to draw the attention of our readers. For this reason, and because the fateful and still ongoing clash between East and West is here shown in a new light, we reprint these pages, with the kind permission of the author and of the publisher, Frederick A. Praeger. (For a discussion of the book, see page* 189.)—THE EDITORS

THE VIETNAMESE MANDARIN

Joseph Buttinger

There can be no doubt that the mandarins, whose authority derived from the acquisition of knowledge, were the country's only wielders of power, nor that as a class they were firmly opposed to technical progress and social change. Thus, if it is true that Vietnam could have avoided the loss of her independence by changing and progressing, the mandarins must be held largely responsible for the failure of Vietnam to defend herself against the West.

The mandarins have indeed been blamed by their critics for almost everything that went wrong in nineteenth-century Vietnam. Vietnam's alleged intellectual stagnation, social immobility, and suicidal policy of isolation from the West were directly ascribed to the conservative attitudes of the mandarins, and to a governmental system that gave them control of the state. Western observers in particular, ever since they began to study Vietnam's strictly mandarinal system of government, have concentrated on discovering and exposing its flaws. They saw that mandarinal mentality rejected the idea of change and progress, and they consequently connected the mandarins' intellectual habits with the state of stagnation in which they found Vietnam. The mandarins' particular intellectual training, which was responsible for their habits of mind, was diagnosed as the whole system's basic fault. In a manner quite typical for the mandarins' own intellectual predisposition, Vietnam's economic backwardness and political inflexibility in the face of colonial aggression were explained by the intellectual matter that fed, and the educational methods that formed, the mandarins'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minds. After a century of such criticism, the word "mandarin" has now become a term of abuse.

Although some aspects of Vietnamese life became quite plausible through this approach, as they would in every effort to show the correlation of mind and society, this Western theory has also done a great deal to obscure the realities of social and intellectual life in nineteenth-century Vietnam. It stresses only one element in a complex pattern of causes, and uses as an explanation what needs to be explained. To say that the mandarins' intellectual formation contributed to Vietnam's state of social immobility is no doubt correct; but even this is an insight of little value without an answer to the question of why Vietnamese society lacked the forces, and the mandarins themselves the motives, to break the mold of an antiquated mind.

• • •

THE RULE OF THE MANDARINS could hardly have lasted for so many centuries if the system had not been adapted to the social structure of the country, and if it had not also had some virtues to recommend it to so many generations of the educated Vietnamese. It consequently found also its apologists, who would not allow these virtues to remain forever obscured by the views of Western critics, which were at least in part due to a desire to destroy mandarinal Vietnam. By exploiting the nationalist sentiments of a later time, some Vietnamese thinkers have actually succeeded in making these virtues more attractive to the intellectuals of their country than the mandarins themselves could have known them to be a century ago.

The mandarinal system of government, its modern defenders proclaimed, allowed for a maximum of democracy in a precapitalist civilization and was free of the universal evils that go with all class and caste rule. The mandarins were not a closed and self-perpetuating group, or selected only from one level of the people, as are most ruling classes in other civilized societies. They were recruited from the whole people, and recruited in one manner only, to which every aspirant for office was compelled to submit: in order to become a mandarin, a young Vietnamese had to go through the required studies and pass the prescribed number of official tests. No other road to public office existed in Vietnam, and no dispensations from the labor of study and the trials of examination were granted either to the wealthy and noble or to a mandarin's own sons. The office of mandarin was neither hereditary nor for sale, and since education was always free in Vietnam, the mandarinate was equally accessible to the poor and the rich. The selection of the country's officials, in short, was based on a democratic principle long before anyone in the West could ever dream of such governmental progress.

This view, which as a weapon of anticolonial propaganda became quite popular among Vietnamese nationalists, does not agree too well with the evidence of history produced by modern research. The realities of Vietnamese social life, as less romantically inclined Vietnamese

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thinkers have pointed out, gave to the rich and the poor no equality of chances to become officials, and the sons of mandarins enjoyed advantages that even the law acknowledged in various forms. Besides, the power of appointment was always reserved to the emperor, and the emperor was never obliged to appoint a man merely because he had passed his tests. But neither social injustice nor temporary abuse, such as the sale of offices at some times under the Trinh, could quite nullify the principle of access to the mandarinate for all. The mandarins obviously were not an economically anchored ruling class, or even a firmly closed group of Vietnamese society, but rather a group of changeable composition with all the main features of a so-called elite.

• • •

THE MANDARINS' character as a governing elite was emphasized both by the nature of the training they received and by the tests they had to undergo. These tests, which were competitive and strictly impartial, made sure that only the fittest among all students received their diplomas as "men of letters," and that the best of these men, in terms of the established criteria, could obtain the highest official degrees. But before a Vietnamese youth could compete for the highest honors, the years of study and the passing of preliminary examinations might well have made him a middle-aged or elderly man. Only the very brilliant were able to get to the summit as young men, after absorbing no less than all the knowledge that existed, or was recognized as existing under the prevailing Confucianist views.

Thus it came about that the country's ruling class, after the seedbeds of feudal power were destroyed, became identical with the country's educated minority. Vietnam was administered and ruled by its intellectuals, and no Vietnamese intellectuals existed who were not either members or associates of the country's ruling elite.

Indeed, a closer examination of Vietnamese society during the first half of the nineteenth century reveals a surprising historical phenomenon: a state had come into being in which the ancient dream of a goverment by philosophers was literally fulfilled; the training of the mandarins was philosophical in the fullest sense of the word. There were no special courses in administration. No instruction in any kind of technical skill was required for the official tests. The subjects to be mastered were exclusively literary, and the skills to be acquired purely rhetorical and scholastic. The bulk of the curriculum consisted of ancient Chinese philosophy, with history and poetry as mere handmaidens of Confucianism. The aim of all studies was to absorb the accumulated wisdom of the past, in order to achieve the moral perfection that qualified a man to rule. Minh Mang himself, the most scholarly of the Nguyen emperors, expounded these views in his remarkable political and poetic writings. He was the truest mandarin-emperor Vietnam has known, a king who based his own qualifications for government and his right to exercise absolute power not on royal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blood but on his role as moral philosopher and head of the nation's intellectual elite.

• • •

MINH MANG's views on government, which had been part of mandarinal ideology since the system had been in force, came close to answering the question of why a philosophical education was regarded as essential for all governmental tasks. To be the emperor's prolonged arm on the lower levels of administration, and to exercise local political power in the name of the state, did not depend on special knowledge or a training in particular skills. The functions of government in Vietnam's pre-industrial and pre-mercantile society were still too simple to require the kind of abilities that only a technical training could provide. The mandarins, apparently, were men who studied for their vocation as no government officials studied ever before them or after, but what they learned was hardly related to their specific tasks. These were essentially political, and in the field of politics, teaching was never of tangible use.

What the mandarins needed was not technical proficiency for complicated governmental functions but a claim to authority that no one would dare to attack. To give them such authority was the purpose of their endless studies and difficult tests. This made the mandarins' seemingly quite irrelevant intellectual training as practical a preparation for the exercise of power as ever was designed. It was more than a systematic ideological indoctrination. It was above all a profound and immensely successful system of justification of governmental authority, erected upon the only universal and indestructible foundation for any man's claim to be obeyed by other men: intellectual and moral superiority, demonstrated in impartial tests that only a man who was thoroughly learned could pass. And the learned alone, Confucius had established, traveled the roads of wisdom, which were also the roads that led to the moral perfection of man. Only the wicked would dare to object to a system of government under which the wisest and best of men were given the highest positions.

The possession of knowledge became thus inseparably connected with the right to exercise authority, and intellectual capacity became the only sure basis for a man's claim to an office of the state.

• • •

IN THIS CLOSE association of knowledge and power, the prestige of learning was always greater than that of mere force. To acquire knowledge, after all, was the only generally accessible gateway to power; knowledge, at least in principle, also determined official degree, which was the measure of status in Vietnamese society. This alone could explain why intellectual achievement became the yardstick of individual greatness and posthumous fame. But there were other reasons. The country's restricted economic activity kept the number of wealthy and the size of their fortunes unusually small. The contrast

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between the misery of the masses and the luxury of the few was less odious than in other civilizations, and the difference in status between the wealthy and the poor was smaller than that between the plain citizen and the official. Besides, public office led as safely to the modest material welfare that was customary for the upper classes as did the pursuit of wealth through economic activity. Elsewhere the ambitious wanted to be rich; in Vietnam they preferred to become officials. It was easier for a mandarin to extract a favor from a man of wealth than for the wealthy to make a mandarin bow to his wishes. And even as a beggar among beggars, the mandarin was still the beggars' king.

For a Vietnamese mandarin or even a mere "man of letters," it was indeed quite possible to combine the condition of a beggar with the standing and dignity of a king. The best of this class never abused their powers to add material comfort to the enjoyment of status. The moral authority of these people was great, and it has transmitted a puritanical streak to their political grandsons of the twentieth century that is as noticeable in the Communist Ho Chi Minh as it is in the Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem. The mass of mandarins, however, was a plague to the people such as only a bureaucracy with too much power and not enough pay could ever become.

Under the first Nguyen emperors, whose dogmatic Confucianism promoted a strictly mandarin-made scale of social values, the main feature of mandarinal ideology reached its most extreme form. Its undeniably positive expressions were numerous, such as the low esteem for force compared to knowledge; the incomparable prestige of the teacher and professor; the pride and joy of families and villages if one of their own passed a difficult test; the honors bestowed by the state upon the great thinkers of the nation; and the high status of the scholars, or "men of letters," even if they preferred a life of study and teaching to the advantages of a mandarinal career. Knowledge indeed had a social value in Vietnam for which it would be hard to find a parallel in the history of civilization. Here, for once, knowledge was power in a literal sense.

The concept of power as a derivative of knowledge, however, was not as exclusively mandarinal as it appeared in these extreme manifestations during the final phase of Vietnam's Confucianist regime. Nor is it an exclusively Asian concept, as was the mandarinate itself, but rather a basic and universally recognized human insight. All children are convinced that to know means to be powerful, and so are all primitive people. Moreover, no supreme being was ever conceived by human minds as omnipotent without also being conceived as omniscient. If the missionaries, in presenting their own supreme being to the Vietnamese people, had not been able to present God as the highest, the wisest, and therefore also the most powerful of all mandarins, they would not have converted so large a number of their listeners to the Christian faith. And the mandarins would not have opposed the Christian religion with such acrimony if the concept of God introduced by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the West had not undermined their authority as custodians of all knowledge. To know more than a mandarin was a challenge to his right to rule; to introduce and spread the knowledge of the West was therefore no less than an attack upon the foundations of Vietnam's Confucian society.

• • •

WHEN THE FRENCH reappeared in Vietnam in the first half of the nineteenth century, there occurred a clash between Western and mandarinal mentality, which preceded by more than thirty years the clash of arms that brought about the end of the mandarinal state. In this duel of minds, which continued after Western arms had triumphed over Eastern philosophy, both sides had sharp eyes for their opponents' moral conceit and intellectual errors, but they had little understanding for each others' motives and none at all of the social forces behind their colliding actions.

What is the use of all these mental exertions, the men from the West would ask the mandarins, if the purpose of study was only to possess the knowledge of the past, if the learned would admit no previously unknown ideas, pursue no scientific investigations, strive for no new insights into nature, and decline to experiment and invent?

Some people in Vietnam were deeply disturbed by these questions, but to the mass of mandarins they made very little sense. "Our country has maintained itself in its present condition for a long time," they contentedly retorted, "and we hope that it will continue to maintain itself in the future."

Vietnam had indeed survived every threat to its existence and grown bigger and stronger during the many centuries of mandarinal rule. Their training, the mandarins felt, had always prepared them adequately for their functions, which for the vast majority were local and purely political, so that they saw no reason at all to acquire new knowledge in order to fulfill their changeless tasks. Only one kind of training could properly qualify these men for their governmental functions, and that was the Confucianist indoctrination a mandarin had to receive before he was able to pass his tests. The prevailing philosophical ideas and moral maxims about family and state were indispensable for the maintenance of the existing order; they were as meaningful for the mandarins under Tu Duc in the 1860's as they had been to their predecessors in the 1460's under the Emperor Le Thanh Tong. This was the reason why the mandarins held their old knowledge in higher esteem than all the scientific ideas and technical skills developed in the West. Even before they realized how profoundly Western ideas and inventions would affect the society they ruled, considered to be perfect, and wanted to maintain, the mandarins had had only contempt for an educated Vietnamese who desired his country to imitate the West's unnatural craving for innovation. They sensed evil in a spirit that would not stay at rest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The men from the West, whom the explosive forces of early industrialism had propelled to the shores of Asia, encountered this mandarinal immobility primarily as an obstacle to their commercial and political projects. How easy it would be, the traders and political adventurers exclaimed, to initiate the economic activities necessary for a transformation of this country into a haven of profitable business! The centers of population lay close to the ocean and could be quickly reached by river from the many harbors along the coast. There were the neglected mines, the forests waiting to be exploited. There were spices and exotic fruits, and no doubt also other treasures of nature not yet discovered that could be extracted by Vietnamese labor, which was cheap, willing, and abundant. The existing material conditions, these Westerners thought, would have made economic progress almost inevitable if the mandarins had not opposed all trade and economic innovation.

For the Westerners of adventurous disposition who traveled or traded in Asia during the first half of the nineteenth century, the attitude of the Vietnamese mandarins was senseless enough to make them believe there was something basically wrong with the "Eastern mind." It was "stagnant" and "petrified," said many of the learned visitors from Europe, and mortally afraid of any kind of innovation or change. The country, it was generally thought, did not participate in the world's technical and economic progress because the mandarins had imposed their own intellectual immobility upon the social body of Vietnam. "Intellectual sterility," in brief, became the accepted explanation for the technological and economic backwardness of the Asian world.

The Frenchmen who roamed Asia between 1820 and 1860 soon convinced themselves that this evil was greater in Vietnam than in China itself, where Confucianism was born and a literary training for public office had been required long before the Vietnamese could read and write. But in China political power had never become a monopoly of the bureaucrats trained in Confucian scholastics. The reasons for this difference between China and Vietnam were many. One was the size of China, which created the need for an intercontinental system of communication, as well as the old and permanent Chinese interest in foreign trade; another was the changes produced in China's political structure by barbarian invasions, which as a rule led to the replacement of the established ruling groups. Rich traders and mighty landlords often became the centers of local political independence, and there was seldom a time when China was without men of great military power whom the civilian mandarins were in no position to subdue. Mandarinal rule in China, consequently, never reached the classical perfection that distinguished the system under the Nguyen dynasty in nineteenth-century Vietnam. To the frustrated French promoters of trade and progress, the damage caused by the mandarins' alleged intellectual sterility therefore appeared infinitely greater in Vietnam than in the country where the mandarinal system was invented.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As to the causes of this obnoxious mandarinal mentality, however, there was general agreement that the Confucian training imported from China had ruined the Vietnamese mind. The basic vice of this training was correctly diagnosed. It stemmed from the notion that knowledge was an existing quantity of established historical facts and philosophical truths. To know them all, interpret them well, apply them faultlessly, and transmit them to the next generation of the learned were the signs of a well-trained and therefore superior mind. The main function of such a mind was not to invent or produce, but rather to absorb the accumulated knowledge, which was regarded as sufficient and impossible to improve upon. A great mind might at best think up some new reason why individual and social perfection depended on the wisdom of the past. But the young man "most likely to succeed" was one with an unusual memory, great rhetorical skill, and a capacity for verbal analysis and abstraction. Originality and creativeness were obviously no advantage for a mandarinal career. A spirited independence of thinking or an everlasting curiosity of mind were not praised as virtues but condemned as vices. In the offices of the Vietnamese state, new ideas by inventive and experimentally disposed individuals could only be an element of political disturbance, and no individual mandarin could advance himself by either learning or trying to do something new. "In order to have knowledge," Confucius had said, "one has to read about the past." Learning thus became memorizing the old and venerable Confucian books. The curriculum for the training of a Vietnamese mandarin therefore remained always up to date, but after centuries of mere verbal exercise, the minds of the mandarins certainly did not crave novelty and adventure.

The mind, which most thinkers in the West had come to regard as the motor of all historical progress, could apparently also become inert and unproductive. This, the philosophers of European industrialism and colonial expansion concluded, is what had happened to the "Eastern mind." A deteriorated mind was the cause of Asia's much lamented refusal to progress along Western lines. From this premise the philosophers of Western expansion in Asia derived a melancholy insight into the relationship of society and mind. If the mind could somehow become an obstacle to all progress, a government of philosophers was manifestly more pernicious than one dominated by men with economic interests, and perhaps even worse than the rule of naked force.

• • •

In reply to such presumptuous views about the causes of Asian stagnation, the mandarins were quick to point out what the East had achieved before the year 1000 A.D., when the West, in relation to China, was technologically backward and intellectually in a state of inaction. But this made as little impression on the men from the West as Western praise of science, industry, and trade made on the mandarins whenever white visitors argued with them on board their un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

welcome ships. The men from the West were not interested in the early achievements of the mandarins. What they resented was the mandarins' opposition to Western ideas and proposals, and what they could not understand, and did not learn from the mandarins either, was why the system was able to survive in nineteenth-century Vietnam. A mind apparently could be as closed as an oyster, and as content to be sterile as a well-fed mule. But how was it possible for people with such minds to remain in power?

If the traders from France had been free from all ideological indoctrination, they would no doubt have discovered the right answer to the question of why the Vietnamese mandarinal system continued to exist. But the thinkers from the West confused them forever with their complex reasoning about the peculiarities of the "Eastern mind." Clearly, the "closed mind" of the mandarins was not just a deplorable result of the antiquated intellectual training. It was the right kind of mind for an antiquated society, the only permissible kind of mind if the mandarinal system should continue to exist, and a fully adequate mind for the functions of an elite within the social structure of Vietnam.

The secret of its adequacy and durability was Vietnam's primitive economy. It generated little impulse for social change. The weak forces aspiring after change were easily suppressed by the mandarins, whose position was founded in the social immobility of Vietnam. No Western system of intellectual training could have produced mandarins eager to promote a transformation of Vietnamese society; asking the mandarins to promote a transformation of society was asking them to cooperate in the liquidation of their rule. Ruling classes are not in the habit of abdicating, and even less are they disposed to question the moral and intellectual values on which their power rests. They have to be overthrown by force or replaced in a long process of gradual social transformation.

But Vietnam did not have what it needed to break the rule of the mandarins and thus to revitalize its thinking and open its mind for the knowledge of the West: a class of people interested in the development of industry and trade. The old order consequently continued to exist, and within this order the mandarins and their training were as sufficient for the tasks of government as was the water buffalo as working animal and power supply within the economy of Vietnam.

• • •

BUT IF THE TRAINING of these men was functional, and if they succeeded in preventing an inner development that would have threatened their monopoly of rule, their minds could not have been as inferior as Western criticism of their immobility implied. They were certainly closed against most ideas from the West, but from their own point of view they closed their minds to these ideas for very good reasons, and in their praise and defense of the existing order they were far from "immobile," "sterile," or "inert." On the contrary, it is doubt-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ful whether any ruling class has ever been more successful than the Vietnamese mandarins in justifying the present by praising the past, and holding off economic and social developments detrimental to their monopoly of political power.

For the mandarins, therefore, social immobility was a condition of survival, and one task of their clever minds was to invent reasons why this immobility was also a condition for the survival of Vietnam. In this they succeeded, in spite of the pressures and temptations to which they themselves and their country had been exposed in more than three hundred years of contact with the West. They succeeded even in the nineteenth century. From the time of Gia Long to the fall of Vietnam, the mandarins' intellects, keen and active as ever, fully upheld the Vietnamese *status quo* against a people as ready for new social activities and intellectual adventures as any in the West.

When the pressure for change became serious, it unfortunately also became quite easy for the mandarins to show that change was a greater evil for Vietnam than the preservation of existing economic conditions. The pressure for change came from the West, and to give in to the West, most Vietnamese knew, meant to become a victim of the West. The West might destroy the prisons in which the mandarins held the bodies and minds of the Vietnamese people, but it would replace it with one stronger and more dreadful than all their prisons of the past. Fear of the West thus became the strongest weapon of the mandarins in their struggle against the forces aspiring to social and political innovation.

When the blows of the imperialist aggressor began to fall on the country, the mandarins as a class were still in undisputed control of Vietnam. But their policy of isolation and their refusal to permit social change accelerated Vietnam's loss of independence, and with independence lost, the mandarins were doomed as Vietnam's ruling class. It took the superior military forces of the West to unseat the Vietnamese mandarins, who were truly one of the world's most enduring political elites.

When the conquest of Vietnam was completed, the mandarins were faced with a bitter choice. Many finished their careers, and even their lives as determined opponents of the colonial regime; what survived of the whole system gradually became a tool in the hands of Vietnam's new foreign masters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICS OF THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN

Michael Walzer

One day I was walking with my grandfather, when we were passed by a man who seemed to greet him rather cheerfully. He was answered with a curtness that was surprising for a man as gentle as my grandfather. "That man's a socialist," said my grandfather. I knew it couldn't be good from the quiet way he said it. He looked at me and smiled. "That's a man who doesn't believe in raising his hat."—JOHN OSBORNE

A great deal of fuss is being made over the discovery, in England, of a group of angry young men. The title, thank heavens, is not a self-designation; it is a free gift of the week-end reviewers. Even the *New York Times* has presented us with a column of quotes from the angriest of the young men, out of all context, of course, and apropos of nothing, but indicating fairly clearly that anger is thought interesting these days, perhaps a trifle piquant, and above all, newsworthy.

It is curious that the group has been discussed so much more in the political than in the literary journals, for their novels, plays and poems really represent the first burst of cultural energy in post-war England. But we shall see that anger in contemporary society has immediate political significance wherever it is expressed. Some intuition of this must account for the reception given the young rebels. Yet no one seems to have any clear idea what they are angry about, and this stems largely from not having any clear idea what there is that it is possible to be angry about.

A sort of mild and increasingly invisible indignation has been established as the proper attitude for proper young men; it is the ritualized discontent which continues to echo from our twenty-year-old past, clothed now in the overcoat and galoshes of responsibility. After all, we are told, the Welfare State is established, prosperity has endured the dangerous post-war decade, Russia has shown us what happens when people get too enthusiastic, and we ought at last to be content to pursue modestly our slight careers in a world where social ideals and social reality "more or less coincide." And when the angry young men stand before us with their hilarious rage and mock this "coincidence," they are allowed their joke but not their purpose. Our common condition becomes their personal tragedy—and they are made "rebels without a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cause." But, we are warned quietly, they are really not rebels at all, but deserters from the true cause of all earnest, patient men. How many quietly outraged liberals agree—but dare not agree in public—with the middle-aged Englishman who announced with stupid tory bluntness: What these young men need is a good kick in the pants.

The point, of course, is that the traditional political responses of the earnest, patient men have suddenly become outmoded. And the angry young men, in their search for a new response, have been forced into paths which are apparently not political at all. To explain this we must glance at contemporary England.

I

In England last year, I once asked my landlord—an 81-year-old retired shopkeeper—why he never listened to the BBC Third Program. Now there are many good reasons for not listening to the Third Program: it is frequently dull, for one; and given to pretentious academic performances, for another. But my landlord gave none of the good reasons; he gave a very bad one. He said that he was not a gentleman; apparently only gentlemen shared in England's cultural pride. I wanted to tell him that we had long ago discovered in America that the things *only* gentlemen did were hardly worth doing. But he was not a humble man, and hardly needed such an infusion of spirit; he simply took his "place" entirely for granted.

Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim—the central symbol of English anger—is probably the son of such a man, and he and his father already live worlds apart. For while England is still a class society, it is now a society under pressure. The effect of socialist reforms has not been to alter its essential structure, but rather to set an increasing number of lower class intellectuals outside the class system altogether. Lucky Jim can neither assume his father's position nor find a new one for himself. Educated on state funds at a "red brick" (i.e. other than Cambridge or Oxford) university, he arrives in the intellectual world in the early 1950s only to encounter an extraordinarily well-established group of men who arrived there 300 years ago. It would be wrong to assume that this group is simply a rigid social class. It is not, or it would never have endured so long. It has been labeled best not as an upper or a middle, but as an educated class. And education in England has traditionally been open to young men who "promised" the right things. It has been possible to rise out of the great middle class and to become a "gentleman," but it required assiduous imitation and the destruction of one's past. So long as the values of the gentleman were the dominant ones in English society, both of these seemed entirely legitimate. But in 1957, when John Osborne insists upon telling everyone that his parents ran a succession of pubs in the working class sections of London, those values are called into question. His refusal to join the ranks of the educated classes constitutes a declaration of war.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By contrast, Lucky Jim's ambition is to join the ranks; he is no less at war, but he is compelled to resort to subterfuge. For him it is a question of making a living. So his method is not assiduous imitation, but calculating deceit. He would become a gentleman outwardly and save his integrity for private moments; he cultivates the art of making faces. On the faculty of a provincial university, Lucky Jim teaches medieval history and nourishes a secret and abiding hatred for the Middle Ages; he tries to maneuver the prettiest girls into his senior section, while keeping out the one boy who knows something about Scholasticism; he struggles to publish an article in one of the academic journals, but mocks the "niggling mindlessness" of what he has written and what he has read; he attends, with as much grace as he can muster, the pretentious and idiotic cultural evenings of his boss, Professor Welch, but despises "filthy Mozart" and eventually escapes to get hopelessly drunk at the local pub.

We do not really get at the core of Lucky Jim—or any of the other angry men—if we see them only in their mockery of the world about them; this mockery is marvelously funny, but its function is essentially defensive. It establishes the gulf between themselves and the educated classes. They cannot bring themselves to join unless on their own terms; the established values of the gentleman are to be laughed at; they no longer have meaning or attraction. Lucky Jim cannot become a gentleman without transforming gentility.

Until fairly recently the English intelligentsia was a well-integrated part or adjunct of the ruling class. Probably the most important thing that could be said about that class was not that it owned the means of production or that it ran the government (although it did both), but that it possessed the culture. And this culture served both as camouflage and justification for political and economic power. The snobbery of class in England is not, as it frequently was in America, a defensive reaction to mass democracy. It is still an essential qualification, a limitation of that democracy. It implies that there are *kinds* of people who ought to rule, and sometimes even that there are kinds of people who ought to read; that it is right and good and in the nature of things that Lord Salisbury, whose forefathers served Elizabeth I, should choose Elizabeth II's prime ministers.

The educated gentlemen of Oxford and Cambridge, whether they be socialists or tories, share in the expectation of the deference they receive from the servants and shopkeepers of the towns. It is from this entire world that Lucky Jim—and Osborne's Jimmy Porter—are alienated; but that means also from England's culture and from much of England's politics. In their hostility, Mozart suffers for the exclusiveness of his associations, the middle classes because they did not destroy the snobbery of the gentleman but squirmed before his arched eyebrows. But even more, the angry young men insist that the culture of the gentleman—precisely because of its class nature—has lost touch with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

human life, and that means ultimately that it has become barren and cruel. The savage attack on the "posh" papers, the musical evenings, the self-centered world of academic irrelevance, the well-bred commonplaces of conventional morality represents an effort to tear through the cultivated mannerism of false gentility, and to reveal stupidity and arrogance and brutality. The bombing of Port Said, the flogging of Cypriot schoolboys, the insensitive delight with the Christmas Island explosion, all this is masked, even as it is occasionally "indignantly" denounced, by the smug decorum of the gentlemanly pose. To flog a 16-year-old boy may not be in good taste, but it is even less so to mention the incident over tea.

A German intellectual, one of the Weimar Republic's "superflous men" and a future fascist, once wrote, "When I hear the word culture, I reach for my revolver." It is important to note that fascist nihilism does *not* provide the tone of contemporary English anger. Powerlessness is not its dominant experience, but rather the outrages of power. The English rebels feel the meaninglessness and hypocrisy of a culture which has been unable to develop a moral reaction to these outrages. Against this impotence they search for a new culture, built out of ordinary human experience and culminating in love: a world, writes Kenneth Tynan, "where people feel . . . that every fat woman on earth is Jesus Christ," where "emotional" is not a dirty word and sex is recognized and humanly recognizable. They would insist that the editors of the Sunday papers, the young students of the ancient universities, even the Queen herself, attend that flogging in Cyprus and examine the boy's back when it is over. They hate only that culture which has refined away too much of human life.

This is the nature of Osborne's insistence upon those experiences which make men human: to be poor and to suffer, he knows, have a positive value; but to struggle to understand poverty and to sympathize with those who suffer is morality. It is with the hope of this morality that his play *Look Back in Anger* ends. But in its course it also suggests the danger of the rebel's alienation. Its plot centers on the relationship between Jimmy Porter—a Lucky Jim who has abandoned deceit and lives by running a sweet shop in a Midlands market—and his wife Allison "kidnapped" from the upper classes. Jimmy is by no means meant to be an entirely pleasant young man, but he does possess a savage honesty, the refreshing pride of an *arriviste* who has declined to arrive and the frightened insecurity of someone caught in a "lost cause": the play is hardly more than his fervent monologue. His wife Allison is essentially phlegmatic, detached from such experiences as she has had. Osborne describes her as "turned in a key of well-bred *malaise*." It is the breeding and *malaise* of her class, and Jimmy tortures her for it. Only the degradation and horror which she endures in the death of her unborn child—a death which her husband in a moment of anger has wished upon her—brings her to the love which Jimmy demands:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the complete acceptance of his hopeless honesty. She must repeat his creed: "I don't want to be neutral, I don't want to be a saint. I want to be a lost cause."

It is to the same renunciation that Allison's class must eventually be brought. Jimmy's anger feeds itself on the anticipation of the gentleman's fall, just as it relishes now the actual fall of his daughters into the arms of men like himself. And all the while he endures the market stall and multiplies frustration into hatred. Not only a "lost cause" in the world of gentility, he must struggle against human failure. His is the sickness of a life deprived of human connection beyond the sphere of its own tortured ego. Osborne means us to sympathize with, but not to admire, his condition, for Jimmy stands only at the beginning of a creative discontent.

II

To be as vehement as Jimmy Porter, Osborne has admitted, is to be virtually uncommitted. A generalized and continuous fury hardly has a program. Yet Jimmy is bitter that the age of the "good, brave causes" is over.

> I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and forties when we were still kids... If the big bang does come and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you.

For those who manage to live outside the Brave New-nothing-very-much, all that is left is to wrestle with private torment. To choose to live outside is probably a moral act, but it is the last one with any public meaning. The continued mockery of conventional morality becomes increasingly senseless. How long can one go on being shocking? Yet the steady harangue against the world in which most people live, the search for ever fresh outrages to the bourgeois soul, at least maintains a relationship to that world and soul.

Osborne remembers the Spanish Civil War—Jimmy's father was killed there—because he believes that at that historical moment personal integrity was able to achieve a social connection and a broader human relevance. But today there is no similarly dramatic call to political activity and meaning. There remain always the concrete needs of human beings, but the angry young men believe that the effort of the intellectuals to attach themselves to these has been false and insincere. The rebels have dismissed the "social conscience" of the middle classes without a tremor of guilt; parlor pinkism was a pose too easily forgotten. In a curious post-Suez pamphlet, Kingsley Amis has attacked the political intellectual as such, and insisted that political activity must reflect self-interest. The work of bringing the Labor Party to power had better be done by professional politicians than by collegiate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

romantics. Its success will realize the needs of the working class, not the disinterestd visions of the intellectuals.

Yet it would not be quite fair to characterize the angry young men as anti-intellectual. They are themselves engaged in a vigorous intellectual activity upon whose human relevance they would insist. It is here that the meaning which Osborne sought in Spain is, in a sense, recaptured. The world of culture has itself become a battleground, and art, literature, and criticism are irrevocably politicized. But they are not politicized as tools offered to the hands of the "revolutionary proletariat," or the Communist Party. The self-expression of the angry young men is enough. While it mocks the world of privilege, it is forced to search for alternatives. And the Welfare State—all the rebels, let me stress, are its partisans; they despise the high-brow who is merely *bored* by it—is not enough, for it is not economic privilege alone which is under attack, but the very culture it has created. The angry young men are the prophets of a radical equalitarianism.

They continually insist upon their own lower class origins. This is not because the life of factory workers and road sweepers, of bus conductors and bartenders is better, but because it is more important, than that of the gentleman. The connections of the angry young men with these people, or rather, with their sons, makes it very doubtful that they can simply be absorbed into the educated classes. Obviously quite a few of those who achieve personal success could climb if they were willing, and come eventually to decorate what now they claim to despise. The apparent integrity of most of the rebels makes such an outcome unlikely; even more, their numbers would appear to make it impossible. At the point where quantitative change in the educated classes threatens to become qualitative, it will be resisted. And the goal of the angry young men is precisely such a qualitative change; they seek a society, in the words, again, of Tynan, where "people who think and people who work can share common assumptions and discuss them in the same idiom."

The drawing room comedy is played out and with it the doddering world of leisured refinement. But what is to take its place? The English young men may look to the Cockney, but they discover only the opposite side of the gentlemanly coin. There is spirit and toughness, boisterous humanity and daily courage, but not cultural independence: culture was the preserve of the educated classes; they ever appropriated the folk song. And in return they offered the two-penny press and the Light Program. But the pushing youngsters of today's working class have discovered instead the music of the Negro. London, Tynan tells us, "is rapidly becoming the jazz center of Europe."

> If you talk to the cats you will find in them these qualities: an instinctive Leftism, an undemonstrative sympathy with anarchy, a dislike of classy politicians, a vivid vernacular made up of Hollywood, space fiction and local dialect, a polite interest in drugs, a good deal of shared

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

promiscuous pleasure, and almost no drunkenness. These young people cannot look at Macmillan's face without laughing and they cannot work up much interest in our inalienable right to flog Cypriot school boys...

"What they lack is a rallying point, social or political." This, for the time being, the Labor Party cannot give them. The politics of the Welfare State seems too far away, too complicatedly removed from any single human hand or eye. The angry young men have been true to their experience in seizing upon cultural rather than political issues, and the quality of their culture has yet to be judged.

THE CULTURE OF THE "PROLES"

William J. Newman

I

One advantage of living in a nation like Britain is that it occasionally produces a point of view that has not occurred to Americans. The current discussion in America on mass culture has been concerned mainly with its effect on the psyche of the distraught middle class and its unfortunate offspring. But the British have been wondering about another aspect of the problem: What is the effect of mass culture on the working class and its particular way of life? Evidently giving up the middle class as lost, and trained to a keen sense of differences in class behavior, some of the British are concerned about what is happening to the worker in the age of the big screen, the big prize, and the big boom. A recent book, Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*,* has focused attention on the problem by attempting to show that the values embodied in British working-class culture are now under sustained attack. If it is a book with many flaws, at least it releases one from the tyranny of middle-class Narcissism.

British working-class life, as Hoggart describes it, is characterized by a sense of *place*. Men live in and belong to a particular locality, usually no more than a very small number of streets. "Life centres on the groups of known streets, on their complex and active group life... [It is] an extremely local life in which everything is remarkably near... [The worker] is more likely to change his place of work than his place of living: he belongs to a district more than to one works." The sense of place and of knowing where you are—is this not the very reverse of subtopia?

* Published in the U.S. by Essential Books, $6.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then there is the opposition the British workers have traditionally felt between "Them and Us." Distrust of the outside world is combined with a sense of uniqueness to create and maintain an atmosphere of exclusiveness. The outside world—which includes not only, say, the Bank of England but also the motor bus which goes *past* their known streets—is the unknown and strange; assumed to be hostile, it is best left alone. Withdrawing into "Us" therefore becomes not only an instinctive act but the means of drawing the bonds even closer. Hoggart maintains that this traditional working-class culture is not so much a matter of community as it is a "sense of group warmth" that is not to be found outside the working class. The "Them-Us" antithesis is simply a generalized expression of this feeling. As a result, efforts to step outside the group way of behavior are heavily paid for. Being sent to Coventry is still probably the most terrifying weapon a trade union can use against a recalcitrant worker, and its roots lie not in an administrative fiat from Transport House but in the feeling that if you are not one of Us you are one of Them. Conformity beyond the extent of middle-class conformity lies at the heart of this culture: "There may be little of the competitive urge to keep up with the Joneses, but just as powerful can be the pressure to keep down with the Atkinses." In the light of this tough defensive pact, appeals from Them to work harder for the benefit of dear old Britain are more than slightly ludicrous.

THE WORKER is concerned with the "personal and the concrete," not with the abstractions which government officials and professors throw at him. As Hoggart describes it, the fundamental culture of the English proles is not politically oriented:

> As to politics ... they have a limited realism which tells them that, as far as they can see, "there's no future" in it for them. "Politics never did anybody any good," they will add ... The important things in life, so far as they can see, are other things.

For facts beyond the immediate experience come from Them and are to be treated accordingly. The worker wants to get by, to get whatever he can out of his life, to get a little extra but not necessarily to move up the social scale. "Most working-class people are not climbing; they do not quarrel with their general level; they only want the little more that allows for a few frills." And getting that little more depends less on skill than on luck, since of course it is Them who arbitrate the game.

Such a flat summary does not do justice to the richness of detail with which Hoggart carries out his exploration of these attitudes. But the drama of the book resides in the other forces which he sees destroying the working-class style of life. And of these none is closer to the heart of the author than the "scholarship boy." It is a story, familiar to Americans, bright working-class boys being taken out of their class and moved into a sort of no-man's land between the middle and working class. The problem involved is by now a cliche in America, but in Britain it is new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and painful, since the scholarship boy is a postwar phenomenon. His removal from his working-class past and his refusal or inability to participate in the culture of the working class must eventually lead to the destruction of that culture. So it was with American immigrant culture; so it will be with British working-class culture. Insofar as Labor Democracy or Tory Democracy—one is no longer sure there is much difference between them—actually achieves its aim of taking the best brains out of the working class *and integrating them into the pre-existing class structure,* the working class must of necessity become both devitalized and rejected.

THE NATURE of the threat to the working class of this particular form of social mobility is not quite grasped by Hoggart. But he does see—luridly—the menace of the mass media to the integrity of the worker. His discussion of the impact of mass publications has the weakness of most such discussion, i.e., it assumes that what people read crucially affects the way they think. Nevertheless, he presents a useful hypothesis when he claims that the mass publications by taking advantage of certain already existing attitudes which spring out of the worker's "native" culture can twist them to mean their opposite. Thus the notion of "live and let live" which Hoggart finds characteristic of working-class tolerance can become, he claims, a form of "mass hedonism"—the idea that all restraints are gone. The group sense of the worker which demanded conformity from his fellows has led to a "callow democratic equalitarianism which is itself the necessary ground for the activities of the publicists." The sense of group solidarity tends to decline into the claim that "everybody's doing it." In this way, he says, mass man emerges from the working man. In this way too the worker is trained to follow not the way of life that is deeply part of his experience and heritage but the way of life taught by the ad-man. All of which leads to "indifferentism; ... a world of monstrous and swirling undifferentiation." Even sensationalism is losing its peculiar working-class character and is becoming a "candy-floss world," a world not of blood and thunder as it pretends, but a world "where nothing real happens, a twilight of half-responses automatically given." Cultural subjection is the end result of this process and the end result of the use—actually, of course, the abuse—of literacy.

What Hoggart seems to be saying is that the unique way of life which the worker had created for himself within the context of an unfavorable and cramped social setting is now being debased to other ends; he is being taught to conform to the same concepts and patterns of behavior as all the other classes. Unfortunately, Hoggart relies not merely on the memories of his own youth, which are always valuable and authentic, but on the more debatable evidence of his studies of mass publications. But is the trash which the worker reads today so different from the trash he read thirty years ago? Hoggart tries to show that it is, but here he is not entirely convincing. He fails to convince because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like so many other British intellectuals he responds to the worker in terms of a quasi-romanticism based on moral patronage.

Nor is naivete missing from Hoggart's approach. He tells us that

> Marriage and the home [among the working class] retain their importance more strongly than we are often inclined to think.

One hopes that the worker knows that "we" do think that. And he also concludes that there remain elements of resistance to mass culture in the working class today:

> The Hulton Survey suggests that bird-fancying is more popular with working-class people than with any others. There are about half a million pigeon fanciers in Great Britain, organized in about one thousand Homing Clubs. These are the men whose birds are released from cane baskets by railway porters at the end of the quieter platforms on Saturdays; the owners, flat-capped and with an eye cocked upwards and a stopwatch ready, wait for their pigeons to come softly out of the Saturday dusk.

The British intellectual as the Universal Aunt watching the children at play is always a piquant sight.

II

If *The Uses of Literacy* has many weaknesses, it is also an important book. One sign of this importance lies in the discussion it has aroused in Britain, a discussion that tells a great deal about the importance of working-class culture for British Socialism. For in Britain the working class is not merely a Marxist category or a socialist abstraction; it is a living fact. And it is this known and felt reality of working-class life which emerges from the discussion of Hoggart's book in a recent issue of *Universities and Left Review,* a new magazine edited by socialist students. One of the *Universities and Left Review* writers, Raymond Williams, offers a lively description of the essential difference between working-class culture and both mass and bourgeois culture. It is not, he says, a lack of the gadgets of suburban existence which is evidence of a self-contained working-class culture with its own particular set of values—a culture which is almost unknown in America. The working class and the bourgeois are "committed to different and alternative versions of the nature and purposes of society, and consequently to different versions of human relations." The workers, in this view, become not just something operated on or found at the bottom of a dark well, but the source of the values which go under the name Socialism.

A surprise, this. One had always thought the Webbs were the source of socialism. And the Gaitskells and all the bright young Oxford men who did so much to help the workers. But Raymond Williams will have none of this guff. Socialism, he says, is not the bourgeois competitive society and is not—repeat, not—the service-welfare state. For in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Williams' view the latter works through the same inequalitarian and impersonal institutions as the former. The workers are responsible for the very essence of socialism, which is the concept of collective democracy—a concept that grows out of the culture of the working class. Williams writes:

> The primary affections and allegiances, first to the family, then to neighborhood, can in fact be directly extended into social relationships as a whole, so that the idea of a collective democratic society is at once based on direct experience, and is available, as an idea, to others who wish to subscribe to it. The working class has indeed no monopoly of these primary virtues, in particular close family allegiance. But the bourgeois idea of social relationships—is not only a cause of tension in itself, leading to open and covert attempts to limit such opportunities; it is also a cause of immediate tension, in that the values of the family cannot be extended into society as a whole—a man works for a family, but competes against other men to do so.

Thus the political significance of British working-class life lies in its family and neighborhood relationships which have been or can be generalized to a whole society. The unique nature of socialism as distinct from the welfare state—a distinction the Labor Party has in effect rejected—comes from its making the best aspects of working-class culture into an ideological goal. And that can best be described in the phrase, community existence—the very opposite of mass culture.

Sentimental bosh? Nineteenth-century romantic humanitarianism? William Morris on the rampage again? Very well. Let us turn to the hard-headed soothsayer of our day, the sociologist.

The picture of working-class life given by Young and Willmott in their recent *Family and Kinship in East London* confirms both Hoggart and the *Universities and Left Review* in their emphasis on a still existing but threatened autonomous community and culture among the workers of Britain (in this particular case the workers of Bethnal Green). The sociologists do not, as perhaps Hoggart might be accused of doing, weep tears over the sad departed past of the workers. They point out that those were not good old days but bad old days; that there was not only unemployment and bad housing but that the husband was often brutal in his family relationships; and that the working-class home was constantly being broken up by early death, drunkenness, unemployment, or just plain old-fashioned immorality.

Much of this has been changed in Bethnal Green today. True, housing is still very bad, but better than it was. The birth rate has fallen so that women are no longer burdened with unwanted children, and the husband not only does not spend all his time and cash in the pub but even helps with the dishes! The changes of the past few decades have thus created an "emerging partnership" between husband and wife where before there had been a family on the verge of collapse.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PATTERN which is and has been characteristic of working-class life is that of a three-generation family. It is a family which has a secure and integral role as the essence of a community of relations and friends. The key to the character and viability of this particular type of family-community life is the length of residence of most if not all of the members of the family in a very restricted area. It is from ties of kinship and friendship based on long residence that a community grows up.

Not only the family with its omnipotent figure of Mum, but all the other relatives, friends and companions that one accumulates through a lifetime of living in the same street are constant and daily face-to-face contacts. This nearness of friends and relations—not to mention enemies—is not merely a matter of necessity but also of choice; it is a thing these people desire for the warmth and solidarity which it brings in time of joy as well as trouble. Thus one out of every three persons in Bethnal Green has his parents living within two or three miles; more striking, 51 per cent of the married women live in the same house or same street as their parents. To say that there is constant interaction between households to the extent that they become merged into an extended family pattern is to use sociological jargon for a life which bursts outside of the small and confined household walls of Bethnal Green. A working-class family thus

> consists of a small cluster of families, that is, the families of marriage of the daughters and their common family of origin, and it is made up in the main of the three generations of grandparents, parents and grandchildren.

But it is even more extended than this description implies, since it includes relatives of every sort and degree; for each couple studied in Bethnal Green there was an average of thirty-four relatives living in the same borough. Long residence is the rule in Bethnal Green: 53 per cent of the people interviewed by Young and Willmott had been born there, and of the others more than half had lived there over 15 years. Long residence by itself creates a community:

> There is a sense of community, that is, a feeling of solidarity between people who occupy the common territory, which springs from the fact that people and their families have lived there a long time.

The closeness of kinship ties, the multiplicity of friends and relations in a particular area, and the consequent feeling of belonging to one place and group is thus seen as a fundamental characteristic of British working-class life and culture.

III

Hoggart says all this community life is being threatened. So do the writers of the *Universities and Left Review*. And so, remarkably, do the sociologists of *Family and Kinship in East London*. They show

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exactly what happens to the ways of life of Bethnal Green when it is transferred to a housing "estate" project on the edge of London. What happens is very simply that the Bethnal Green existence comes to an abrupt end and the workers are brought uneasily to adopt mass middle-class standards of existence.

Living in these housing estates can be a grim experience to the workers of Bethnal Green. Suddenly they find all their props, all their habits and relationships at an end. On the housing estate they might as well be at the end of the world. As one desperate woman put it:

> "When I first came," said Mrs. Sandeman, "I cried for weeks, it was so lonely. It was a shock to see such a deep hill going up to the shops."

Presumably Mrs. Sandeman is no longer so shocked by the hills that creep up to the shops, but the facts of life in a housing estate have not, therefore, changed: they are isolation, the collapse of community life, the competitive urge to get ahead of you-know-who. There are other things of course: better housing (the worker is surely not a romantic), a better place for the children to grow up. These are the reasons they go and stay. They do *not* stay because they enjoy living there. They come to terms with it, but most of them still look to Bethnal Green as their home and would like to go back. There is no Mum, no pub (in one "estate" there is one pub for 5,000 persons, in Bethnal Green there is one for every 400), no childhood friends, no network of relations. There is of course the tellie and to that they cling with desperation. Instead of dropping into Mum's next door they stay at home, lower the shades, turn out the lights and sit quietly waiting for the BBC or ITV to amuse them.

> It is not just that [the wife] sees less of relatives than before: as a day-to-day affair, as something around which her domestic economy is orgnized, her life arranged, the extended family has ceased to exist.

Do they settle down? Of course. But what does settling down mean in a housing estate? Getting to like the tellie.

"Everybody lives by themselves," said a Mr. Morrow. "You can't get away from it, they're not so friendly down here. It's not 'Hello, Joe,' 'Hello, mate.' They pass you with a sideglance as though they don't know you." They don't know you, of course, since friendship is not the sort of thing planned in the offices of the London County Council. So they mostly ignore each other. To the planner this must seem wilful perversity. Has he not gone to great pains to bring together people of similar economic background? To be sure the people in the housing estate are brought there from all the slums of London instead of just Bethnal Green, but what do these people expect? To move the whole bloody borough at once? Yes, that's it, the whole bloody borough!

Still, there are plenty of good houses on these estates. And these houses do have their effect; they force people to compete against each other to keep up appearances. The house becomes a tyrant. If you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have a toilet and a tellie, you're all right. If you have only a toilet, you're not so good.

IV

One must not be sentimental. "Life is earnest, life is real and the grave is not the goal." The goal is a housing estate. Nor must one show any sign of delight when the worker asserts his independence and calls an unofficial strike against the orders of both the government and his union boss. That will weaken the economy of Britain and thereby the whole Western way of life. Things are too serious to allow the worker to demonstrate his sense of class identiy. No. One must raise one's hat and pass on, recognizing that it is time for the worker to lose his parochial ways.

But in passing several points may be made. One is that as the working-class way of life disappears the moral source of socialism may disappear too. Maybe socialism can be kept alive without the source itself, and then again maybe it will be transformed—into the welfare state. Even in such a drab, limited and finally unsatisfactory transformation there will of course be important gains; but Hoggart, Williams and our two sociologists tells us that there will also be significant losses. And only now, with no lapse into sentimental nostalgia or idyllic fantasies about the life of the proles, are we beginning to appreciate the magnitude of those losses.

Footnote to the Power Elite

Today approximately 50 per cent of American manufacturing—that is everything other than financial and transportation—is held by about 150 corporations, reckoned, at least, by asset values. If finance and transportation are included, the total increases. If a rather larger group is taken, the statistics would probably show that about two-thirds of the economically productive assets of the United States, excluding agriculture, are owned by a group of not more than 500 corporations. This is actual asset ownership. (Some further statistical analysis is called for if financial corporations be included, for these, of course, double up. One of the largest and most plainly oligarchically controlled corporations in the United States, the Metropoiltan Life Insurance Company, duplicates assets because it holds securities of other corporations.) But in terms of power, without regard to asset positions, not only do 500 corporations control two-thirds of the non-farm economy but within each of that 500 a still smaller group has the ultimate decision-making power. *This is, I think, the highest concentration of economic power in recorded history.* Since the United States carries on not quite half of the manufacturing production of the entire world today, these 500 groupings—each with its own little dominating pyramid within it—represent a concentration of power over economics which makes the medieval feudal system look like a Sunday School party.—[From *Economic Power and the Free Society,* by A.A. Berle Jr., published by the Fund for the Republic.]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE LUKACS: AN INTELLECTUAL PORTRAIT

L. Stern

How can life become essential? How can value become reality and meaning be made effective? Around these questions the lifework of George Lukacs is centered. The paradox of his development is that he found the lost "homeland" in Stalinism and yet retained the radical character of his questioning. Through this radicalism Lukacs even won the admiration of his critics. Some of them he praised, some of them he scorned or ignored; but he gained the admiration of them all. Thomas Mann, whom he considers the greatest novelist of our century, called Lukacs the most important literary critic of the time and Sartre, whom he once accused of intellectual dishonesty and demagogery, sees in him one of the leading philosophers of our day. Sir Herbert Read who, by his own admission has hardly read Lukacs, sees his appeal in a combination of great sensibility and dogma. Maybe Read wasn't even aware of how well his explanation hit the mark.

For the dogma is the word; the word which can be turned and turned about, which friend and foe alike can make use of. The sensibility, however, relates to that image behind the word which flickers up and disappears only to reappear again. The word is the shell of the creed and here lies the divide between friend and foe. For if the creed is strong enough it will cast out the words which have become empty and proven to be lies. But if faith is only a remote ideal and the word merely a mask for cynicism and hypocrisy then there is nothing to halt the cruel unfolding of tyranny. Here is the dividing line between Lukacs and his Stalinist foes.

Perhaps Lukacs was thinking of himself when he warned his readers that it is not the political prejudices of a Kleist, a Balzac or a Dostoievsky which are important for an understanding of their work. It is rather the work itself—often contradictory to these prejudices—which provides the key to a critical understanding of the author. In this sense the conversions and reconversions of Lukacs to "Marxism" and his praise of "Stalin's genius" in his most recently published books, lie outside of his significance, and it is not through his frequent self-accusations and recantations that his evolution can be understood.

His early literary work prophesies the later political destiny of its author—so much so that we shall be able to develop his biog-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raphy from words he had written long before they were realized by the actual choices of his life. A strange dialogue would then develop; "a solitary dialogue between a man and his destiny"—as Lukacs would say —a destiny rich in spectacular changes, whose thread remains unbroken not because of the accidental fact that it emanates from one and the same person but because of the strength of an inner logical development.

Meager biographical details are known about Lukacs. Born in 1885 into a family of the Hungarian petty nobility of Jewish origins, he first came under the influence of the southwest German school of Neo-Kantian thought. During the years between 1910 and 1912, Lukacs was frequently seen in the home of Max Weber where he was one of the animators of the circle that formed around the famous sociologist. In 1911 he published a collection of essays in German under the title *Die Seele und die Formen* ("The Soul and the Forms"). This work drew the attention of Thomas Mann and many other writers to Lukacs.

During the war years, however, he drew close to the working class movement. In the Hungarian revolution of 1919 he became Commissar of Popular Education in the government of Bela Kun; after the defeat of the revolution he escaped to Vienna and later to Germany. There he wrote *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* ("History and Class Consciousness"), published in 1923, which remains one of the few Marxist works of philosophical importance. Zinoviev severely criticized this book at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International held in June 1924.[1] Attacking it for "idealist" tendencies, he gave the signal for a whole series of trials against heretics initiated by the first "thought bureaucrats" within the Comintern (Rudas, Thalheimer, Bela Kun, Deborin, Luppol and others). Lukacs and those who were attacked as his disciples (Korsch, Revai and Fogarasi) were victims. While Korsch passed over to the ultra-left opposition, Lukacs and his friends disowned their previous writings, submitted to the Comintern authorities and went to the Soviet Union where they remained until 1945. There Lukacs wrote his literary essays, published in Eastern Germany and Hungary between 1945 and 1948.

Late in 1948 Lukacs was attacked by his old enemy Rudas, who denounced the "bourgeois influence" in his work and violently accused him of "cosmopolitanism." These accusations were taken up by his former pupil Revai who, in the meantime, had become a Zhdanovist. Lukacs was forced to resign his chair of aesthetics at the University of Budapest, but in 1949, he announced his reconversion to Leninist orthodoxy, in the form of a severe self-criticism.

When in October 1956 Imre Nagy formed his first insurgent government, Lukacs joined it as Minister of Popular Education. Together with Nagy, Losonczi, Kadar, Donath and others, he laid the groundwork for the organization of a new, anti-Stalinist communist party. Unaware that two days later he would betray them, this group charged Kadar to present the new party to the people. On November 4, 1956,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when Kadar was installed in power by Russian troops, Lukacs—along with Nagy—escaped to the Yugoslav Embassy and from there was abducted to Rumania with the other members of this group. Kadar tried time after time to obtain Lukacs' collaboration, but this he definitely refused. Even after permission was granted him to return to Hungary, where he now is, not a word of self-criticism has come from him. The ruling authorities, though, have announced several times his intent to recant.

Why this refusal? Did Lukacs not already make two self-criticisms on previous occasions? And, if we must accept this refusal for what it actually is—a rejection of Stalinism—why did he wait more than thirty years? We believe that the answer may be found in his own work. Reversing the usual procedure of "psychologism" and "biographism" which consists in explaining an author's work by taking his life as point of departure—a procedure Lukacs always criticized—we will attempt here to understand his psychology and biography, even if only fragmentarily, through his work.

I

In his very first book (*The Evolution of Modern Drama,* 1908), written in Hungarian at the age of 23, Lukacs engages in a critical discussion with those vulgar sociologists who try to explain the content of literary work directly through an analysis of the economic and social substructure. Lukacs argues that it is not the content of a literary work which is determined by this substructure but the form. The form is a principle of selection, a principle which chooses from among manifold experiences those which have to be described; it is an *a priori* point of view through which the artist sees his experiences *sub specie formae;* it is a point of view of life and the things, *i.e.*, a worldview. Coming from life, its task is to change this life. What is socially determined is, first of all, the worldview of the artist; then, the degree to which the social conditions of his time can generate material for those experiences necessary for the forms which might have been created independently of him; and, finally, the form itself as a means to success, because the more profound the success, the more profoundly social is the reason for it.

This struggle against vulgar sociology—later to become a struggle against vulgar Marxism—and the insistence upon the analysis of creative forms are a major "leitmotiv" in Lukacs' literary career. Even in his latest books written after 1949 in which, under attack by both his old enemy Rudas and his former disciple Revai, he several times renounces his concept of a social and aesthetic analysis of form in favor of an analysis of content, Lukacs indicates to all those who have grasped his work that the very fact that he is unable to discover any analysable form in discussing the products of "socialist realism" is the most devastating criticism possible of the entire school.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the opening essay of his second book *Die Seele und die Formen* (published in 1911), Lukacs attempted to define the task of the critic. It is to uncover the content hidden and contained—indirectly and unconsciously—within the form. The critic appears upon the scene at that moment when the subject of the work takes on form. But "the form of life is no more abstract than the form of a poem" and "the essay aspires after truth but, like Saul who went to search for his father's donkeys and instead found a kingdom, so will the critic who is truly able to seek truth find, in the end, the goal he did not seek: life." Behind the works of the past the critic projects our own desires. This answers Marx's question: how can a work possess eternal value in spite of its historicity? "Every period requires other Greeks, other Middle Ages, another Renaissance"... "differing interpretations of the Renaissance may peacefully live alongside each other just as a new poet's 'Phaedra,' 'Siegfried' and 'Tristan' will always leave untouched those created by his predecessors." These lines were written long before Lukacs' conversion to Marxism, yet not only do they answer the question raised by Marx; they are, we believe, within the perspective of a Marxist aesthetics.

II

But let us return to our starting point: through form we arrive at life and through life we arrive at form. Each literary form is but a step in the hierarchy of the posibilities of life. "The all-decisive word about a man and his destiny has been pronounced when it is decided through what form his life can be expressed and what form is required by his high moments." Form thus becomes an ethical value-judgment and life means either everyday life in which everything is possible because nothing is realized or the higher life with its absolute demands in which everything is lived to the utmost limit. "How can essence become alive?" is the question to which tragedy replies; "how can life become essential?" is the question to which the Epos-Novel responds.[2]

In Lukacs' later work the same terms will reappear in another form; everyday life will become reified (*i.e.*, false) consciousness and the higher life will become true consciousness. But since all consciousness is consciousness of Being (*Bewusstsein ist bewusstes Sein*), true consciousness must become the consciousness of a totality in reality. Social classes are the only concrete totalities. And the class which will be able to solve the social problem, from whose viewpoint society can be reorganized, is the class of producers; in capitalist society, the proletariat.

But let us not anticipate the viewpoint of Lukacs' first Marxist work, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*. If there is a hierarchy of lives, then the life lived to its utmost limit becomes the highest possibility of life and the tragic the highest of forms. In everyday life absolute ethical demands are satisfied by compromises, half-solutions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Demands are sacrificed to life. But in tragedy it is life which is sacrificed to these demands. In life, we only *live* in our highest moments and this desire for self-realization gives birth to tragedy.

How is it possible to live suspended between everyday life with its virtues and duties devoid of meaning, and absolute life which, by its very nature, is inhuman since it seeks to realize in the individual the ethical work of all mankind? "Cognizance should become action."[3] This is Lukacs' answer to this dilemma without a way out. The constitutive elements of Marxist thought appear in the development of the thought of Lukacs: from social conditioning of the forms to a solution of the apparently hopeless situation by means of action. Since Marx, in fact, the question no longer is one of interpreting the world but of "changing it." The subject of *Die Seele und die Formen* is the isolated individual face to face with the universe. Only the ethical breaks in upon this isolation. Communities already exist within the ethical world and only the action of the community in the full measure of its consciousness is needed to arrive at the final term of Marxism. Thus we can trace at this point in the development of Lukacs' thought the same phases we find in the development from Kant to Hegel and to Marx. In fact, if I see the world from the viewpoint of history instead of from that of the isolated individual, then the scandal which is my death (*i.e.*, the natural limit of the isolated individual's life) disappears. Tragic thought is transcended by dialectic thought.[4]

It is possible to indicate only briefly that the same problem may be encountered in the young Hegel and the young Marx. In his Jena Aphorisms Hegel writes, "The highest that ought to be transcended would be death" (Aphorism 30) and "Man, no longer accusing God but acknowledging his dependence, wants to know for what reason he exists . . ." (Aphorism 50). Man, no longer accusing God, has already transcended his tragedy. Likewise in the work of the young Marx we find a concern with the same problem. To Ruge, who asked him to have the courage to despair, he replied: "Let the dead bury the dead and mourn them. Our fate shall be to enter the new life alive." The finality of tragedy is transcended when the future appears on the scene. The task is not to anticipate this future dogmatically but to find the new world through the critique of the old. That Marx arrives at this goal through a critique of society and political economy whereas Lukacs arrives there through literary criticism and a critique of society is of no importance. We want simply to indicate here the organic quality of Lukacs development; it was not *primarily* determined by an external eruption such as the First World War even though that event played such a great role in the development of many European intellectuals.

III

How is it possible to live today; how does one *have* to live today? The echo of these questions can be heard behind every line of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lukacs. The forms of life are weighed and they are found wanting. He introduces us into an atmosphere of infinite longing: a longing that remembers; that tells us once it happened, once it was there. When the order of the movement of the stars and the movement of men was the same; when every man was a philosopher and philosophy had not yet come to mean homesickness; when perfection was habitual and genius was not required to approach the ideal, for the ideal and the real were one and the same, and no break existed within man or between man and his world...

It is always romantic *youth* who projects this behind our individual or common past. Lukacs was always aware of the problem of the romantics—he has waged a lifelong fight against this school—yet kinship is either the cause or effect of this opposition.

"Men," writes Lukacs, "who on the other side of the Rhine would have become tragic heroes could here live out their destiny only in poetry. With progression in the external world excluded, every energy turned inward upon itself and soon 'the land of poets and thinkers' surpassed all others in depth, fineness and fervor. But because of this the gap separating the peaks from the foothills became ever wider. Only one way was open: a higher aloofness; a mortifying aloneness." The same men in France would have been concerned with the outer world in terms of tragedy or revolution. In Germany "they were fanatics and slaves of their own development; to them everything was dear and valuable inasmuch as it furthered their growth." They longed for a community in which they could abandon their isolation. "But because they looked upon this self-created and phantom Cosmos as a real one they had to believe in the possibility of acting without renouncing." As a result, among those romantics who grew old, "Some became epigones of their own youth, some saved themselves, tired from a hopeless search for a new religion and the vision of an always greater anarchy. Those who once had set out to form and create anew the entire world became praying proselytes." Of Novalis,[5] Lukacs writes, "He asked Life, but Death brought him the answer... It was the greatest tragedy of the romantics that only the life of Novalis could become poetry; his victory is the death sentence of the entire school. But all the means he wished to employ for the conquest of life sufficed only to prepare a beautiful death; their philosophy of life was one of death; their art of living one of dying."

A clearer indictment of the romantic is hardly conceivable. Except for certain terms, Lukacs never changed any part of this judgment. His recent work is a lengthy polemic against romanticism and an apology on behalf of his interpretation of the classical viewpoint. We shall see how his pro-Stalinist political choice was influenced by this indictment of romanticism and how, by a strange turn, what he most opposed was to determine what he was to become.

This affinity between opposites has its origin at the point where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the tragic and romantic attitudes become identical. *Ars moriendi,* or the "art of dying," is also the tragic inasmuch as the tragic character dies his "beautiful death" on the stage for precisely the same ideals that maim the spectator in everyday life. The tragic, when it occurs, presupposes a division in the classical world; a division between Man and his world; a division within Man himself. Yet it sees clearly that the tragic solution is beyond realization. The romantic, on the other hand, wants to live out his unattainable yearnings which are, in turn, hostile to life. He therefore must find his answer in "beautiful death." Death, for the romantic, is an answer; for the tragic, a question: "how can essence become alive?" And because the question in this form was constantly posed the tragic could be transcended dialectically by passing from the perspective of the ahistorical and isolated individual to that of history and society. But romanticism, as soon as it became an answer rather than a question, could not develop beyond the fatal point of the "beautiful death."

The main protagonist in the dialogue of "Of the Poverty of Spirit," after realizing his inability to create a community and thus failing the metaphysical class to which he belongs—every metaphysical class having its own ethical demands to fulfill—commits suicide while pointing to the words of the Bible: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

With the suicide of this "ascetic of purity" as his antagonist calls him—a suicide which will continue to haunt Lukacs—the "pre-Marxist" period in Lukacs' career comes to an end. But the questions, "how can essence become alive?" and "how can life become essential?" remain to be answered in life and not in a literary form or expression.

IV

We have already hinted at the answers which were to be given by Lukacs in his major work, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein.*[6] Tragic consciousness is a consciousness of limit. Class consciousness is *not* the awareness that the total sum of isolated individuals have of their being, but rather the limit set for that class which starts out from what is objectively possible for it in resolving the problems of society. Such a class, from whose viewpoint the organization of society is possible, is the proletariat. But the class consciousness of the proletariat is not what the worker Peter or Paul thinks or feels; it is what he *should* think or feel, taking his class interest as point of departure. In this way the class consciousness of the poletariat becomes the ethics of the proletariat.

As we recall, the answer of the young Lukacs to the insoluble situation was that consciousness should become action. It can be found again in the demand for the unity of theory and practice; *i.e.,* in practice. Proletarian class consciousness can be achieved only through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practice of class struggle by the proletariat and this practice must be directed by the same consciousness. The proletariat cannot liberate itself without putting an end to class society, without the complete reorganization of society. That is why the class consciousness implies a self-awareness. The bourgeoisie, which in the course of its evolution produces its own negation (the proletariat), cannot become conscious of itself without negating the terms of its existence.

Whether my starting point is the history of modern thought or the economic and social relations of the capitalist world, I arrive at the structure of "reification." Largely through Lukacs and his school, this term has found such a wide reception that we only need to recall its definition summarily: the relationship between people takes on the character of relationships between things (*res*), commodities. Objects not subjects appear, the kernel of whose relationships is covered by a thick crust. The structure of reification is the central problem of modern society. The product of man becomes a *thing* independent of himself and a world is created in which the relatednesses of objects takes command. This turns against man, thus alienating him from himself. Even if advantage may be obtained from knowing the inner laws governing this process, the process itself cannot be influenced.

ONLY IN OUR DAY has the reification of consciousness become all embracing. Mass culture and the entertainment industry are but one of its products. Qualitative differences disappear and the realm of quantity prevails. Creativity is replaced by efficiency and meaning by order. The rhythm of production and the rhythm of work are the same as the rhythm of false literature and entertainment. Aristotle had long emphasized that freedom is based upon freedom from work and Marx, consistently enough, considered freedom as free time. But under the impact of reification "free time" becomes an extension of the working hours. One of the repressive means employed by the ruling class used to be the concealment of truth or the outright lie. Now, the most subtle form of repression lies in the stultifying effect of a great mass of correct information which is misappropriated by reified consciousness. The former isolated individual is transcended by the false community of "togetherness" in which not only the isolation but also the individual is surpassed. Society's punitive system clearly indicates this:[7] solitary confinement was the punitive expression of the isolated individual; the cell was Lebniz' *monad,* having neither door nor window. But the concentration camp is the coercive means of men who live in "togetherness." To attempt to revive the old would be both political romanticism and *a priori* doomed to failure. To revive solitary confinement as against concentration camp, or to resurrect the isolated individual as against the constituent parts of "togetherness" would be no Promethean deed. In fact, only the abolition of all punitive systems and the creation of the true community would be Promethean.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The structure of reification, as discussed by Lukacs, becomes thus all important for the understanding of present day society. It cannot be our task to anticipate any future socialist program but it can be well foreseen, that if the socialist movement is to regain its force again, it will achieve this goal, not so much through the traditional social and economic demands of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century; not through the demands for a betterment of working conditions, for the nationalization of industry or the collectivization of agriculture, etc., not even primarily through direct political action—since the success of such action might very well be turned into its opposite by the reified consciousness—but through a critique of reification and a fight against its consequence, the impairment of life's value. If with Lukacs we hold that proletarian class consciousness is not the actual psychological consciousness but the potential consciousness of the worker taking his class interest as a point of departure, then this consciousness has to be determined by the class interest of the proletarian today, which is the transcending of reification. The struggle for the consciousness of the proletariat which was fought on a socio-economic level shall be continued on a philosophical and psychological sphere: instead of a calculative handling of objects, a regard for the faculties of Man as subject. Whether this class consciousness shall create political associations (parties) or shall forego such association and build different or higher ones, cannot be foreseen as yet.

V

Bourgeois consciousness is reified consciousness, but classical philosophy has already shown us how to transcend reification. For Kant, the problem is one of seeing the world not as given, independent of the subject's act of cognizance (by means of God, for example), but rather as the product of the subject himself. This consciousness is blocked by the irrationality of the *Ding-an-sich* (the Thing-in-itself). We cannot show here how this irrationality was transcended by Hegel from an historical point of view and how Marx found the subject-object of history in social classes. But we recall the special place the proletariat occupies in Marx because this class, being the last class in society, cannot liberate itself without liberating all of class society, and cannot undertake this liberation without the *free* and conscious act which is the revolution.

Through its struggle the proletariat develops its consciousness in such a way that when this evolution reaches its end the proletariat ceases to exist. But up to that moment the proletariat is under the influence of bourgeois consciousness. The revolution is therefore a point of junction in history; functionally, this is the same place as the "great moment" described in Lukacs' previous writings on tragedy.

For, during the revolution, the mass of the population takes its destiny into its own hands. The discrepancy between ethics and reality

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is abolished; essence and existence, value and reality lose their apartness. Both as determining his own self and determined by his own self, Man becomes master of his destiny in reality. What was an atemporal experience in tragedy becomes here an historical event. In tragedy Man achieved self-realization in his ruin; here it is to be achieved in his resurrection. What was an end becomes now a beginning. The higher life, once created by tragedy in an illusory world, now appears in reality; where once the intention was to be formed it is now the breaking of the forms. The tragic world in its completedness gives way to the dramatic world of reality. Tragedy is transcended (*aufgehoben*, i.e., abolished, lifted to a higher plane and preserved) in dialectics. It should be recalled that Marx had a similar vision when he spoke of that historical genesis whose ascent is tragic, whose descent is serene and whose turning point is the fall of the tragic.[8]

For Lukacs, historical materialism is the theory of proletarian consciousness whose practice is revolutionary activity and whose organization (the revolutionary proletarian party) is the mediator between theory and practice. The party is also mediator between Man and history because it develops the consciousness of its members at the same time that it intervenes in history. This is why only total commitment of the whole personality to the party and the transposition of every theoretical and political question into organizational and practical terms can render the party efficacious for fulfilling its historic mission as well as determining the rules of individual ethics and behavior. In commiting myself totally I must renounce my individual freedom and accept party discipline because every individual liberty which is not total liberty only prolongs the constraint of class society. Frequent criticism and self-criticism guarantee the party its mediating role. The revolution, on the other hand, can be nought but the *free* and conscious act of the proletariat. So Lukacs argues.

In *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* Lukacs insists upon a party with a strong inner cohesion. In his *Memoirs* Victor Serge recalls that Lukacs proposed the commitment of historians in the service of the party central committee long before the Stalinist era. This, together with the concept of the revolution as the free act of the proletariat, explains Lukacs' political position. The party is an expression of the highest possible degree of non-reified consciousness. In non-revolutionary times the party retains its character as vanguard of the proletariat and bearer of its class consciousness. It also serves as the revolution's memory and as a school for the proletariat. The party is bureaucratized? No doubt. Yet this bureaucracy is the highest possible expression of proletarian class consciousness; this is why its authority must be yielded to. Should, however, this bureaucracy become so ossified that henceforth it cannot place itself as the head of a revolutionary movement of the proletariat, then it has turned against the proletariat. At such a point Lukacs' subordination to the authority of the Stalinist party had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to end. Identification with the party, even if bureaucratized, in non-revolutionary times; active participation in the revolution, even against the party—such is the political viewpoint of Lukacs.

VI

His work during the Stalinist epoch seems to explain this position. The classicists (Hegel, Goethe *and, implicitly,* Lukacs) tried to live after the revolution (French *and* Russian) in the name of its traditions by making compromises with the present, whereas the romanticists (Hölderlin *and* Trotsky) could find only a purist and sectarian solution.

It is far from our intention to defend Lukacs' position; our task is to clarify the intent of his work and to affirm its continuity. One of the traits of Lukacs' life and work has been to accept the ultimate consequences of his choices. "Socrates emptied the cup," wrote Lukacs in *Die Seele und die Formen.* Destiny was generous toward Lukacs. It permitted him, after emptying the cup, to return to his original choice for the revolution; not only in his veiled essays on Hegel and Goethe but in clear and firm taking of sides for the Hungarian Revolution. Perhaps the function of an immanent critique of his position should be to show that this great dialectian has drawn *only* the logical consequence of his original choice: identification with the party, yes; but the limit of such an identification is not the present incapability of the party to place itself at the head of the revolution; it is rather the fact that it no longer pursues true revolutionary practice. From such a viewpoint it was *Lukacs* who, by attaching himself to a party void of any content, *was the romantic.*

He became a romantic in reaction to the romantic school. His whole work takes on an apologetic character. His analysis in the works he wrote during the Stalinist period becomes weaker and weaker, as if his real concern is no more than an apology for his development. For even if we accept his notion that the classicists tried to live in the world by making compromises the question becomes one of the *measure and extent* of these compromises. And because Lukacs could not choose the right measure his compromise became an acceptance. "Those who had once set out to form and create anew the entire world became praying proselytes," wrote Lukacs about the aging romantics. But he too became a "praying proselyte" because he crossed the one narrow bridge linking the classic and the tragic on the one side and the romantic on the other. What saved him was only accidental; he lived long enough to witness a new revolutionary period. If his judgment of the old romantics can no longer be stamped upon Lukacs himself, it is because in the recent Hungarian revolution he firmly took the side of the workers and youth against the Stalinist regime. MAY, 1957.

POSTCRIPT: The preceding pages were written almost a year ago. The contention was that if the meaning of Lukacs' work is understood correctly then he would not undergo the usual ritual of self-criticism and recantation for his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

role in the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956, despite the fact that such action was reported as pending. Furthermore it was clear that the apologetic character of his work would also have to change. We can now refer to two books published by Lukacs since then.

First, the name of Lukacs does not appear among the 169 Hungarian writers who signed the "loyalty declaration" to the Kadar government. There has been no pro-regime announcement from Lukacs. On the contrary in a collection of three essays published by Einaudi in October 1957 in Italy, *Il significato attuale del realismo critico,* which contains his writings on avant-garde literature written about the time of the 20th Congress, he asserts the continuity of his work and draws the attention of his readers to the "Aesopian language" he had to use during the time of Stalin and Zhdanov. He condemns here the errors of Stalin and the "criminal Moscow trials"—in no stronger terms than Khrushchev employed, to be sure.

Lukacs' new book published in Hungary in December 1957 contains one chapter of his aesthetics. It deals with the central category of his aesthetics, "particularity" in an historical and systematical context. The usual lipservice to the authority of Stalin and Malenkov (a little late in the day) can be found in it. But who would be deceived by this? Not even the third-rate party politicians and theoreticians for whom they are intended. Since becoming aware that Lukacs is no longer one of theirs, they have begun a vilification campaign against him. From East Berlin through Prague to Budapest (*Cf., France-Observateur,* Nov. 28 and Dec. 26; *Tàrsadalmi Szemle,* Dec. 57; *L'Express,* Feb. 13; *East Europe,* February, etc.) his prosecutors agree that Lukacs has passed over to the "camp of the enemy." This campaign might be viewed as preparation for a forthcoming trial against Lukacs. However as this would harm Stalinist casuistry more than its intended victim, the most serious apprehension is for the suppression of Lukacs' forthcoming Aesthetics, the fruit of his career.

---

1 *Cf.* Karl Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie,* second edition, Leipzig, 1930. Also: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique,* Paris, 1956.

2 Lukacs, *Theorie des Romans,* written in 1912-1915, but published in 1920.

3 Lukacs, "Von der Armut am Geiste," in *Neue Blaetter,* 1912.

4 Lucien Goldmann made this connection between the tragic and the dialectic views explicit in "La Communauté humaine et l'Univers chez Kant," 1948 and "Le Dieu Caché," 1955. Since the work of the young Lukacs is generally unavailable the reader can have recourse to the last mentioned book of Goldmann, which is an interpretation of Pascal and Racine through the concepts developed by Lukacs in *Die Seele und die Formen.*

5 Pseudonym of Freiher Friedrich von Handenberg (1772-1801), poet, mystic and nature philosopher of German romanticism.

6 The first essay of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* was translated by Michael Harrington in *The New International,* Summer 1957. The French review *Arguments* will publish the whole book in instalments in the translation of J. Bois and Kostas Axelos. The first essay appeared in *Arguments,* Avril-Mai 1957.

7 *Cf.* Max Horkheimer und Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklaerung,* 1947, p. 269.

8 *Cf. Marx-Engels Gesamt Ausgabe,* I/1, pp. 13, 56, 115, 133; also: Karl Marx, *Der historische Materialismus, Die Fruhschriften,* edited by Landshut and Mayer, Vol. 1, pp. 268 ff. and: Karl Marx, *Der* 18. *Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte, Cf.* Werner Heider, *Die Geschichtslehre von Karl Marx,* Stuttgart und Berlin, 1931, p. 76.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMERICAN NOTEBOOK Some Brief Comments On the Domestic Scene

POPULAR TASTE & THE AGONIES OF THE YOUNG

Harvey Swados

Within recent months the Leopold-Loeb murder case has served as the theme of a movie by Alfred Hitchcock, novels by Meyer Levin, James Yaffe and Mary-Carter Roberts, a paperback case history, and a Broadway dramatization of Mr. Levin's most successful and fascinating *Compulsion*. Superficially, it would seem obvious that this terrible murder and its aftermath—a sensational courtroom trial involving two wealthy, brilliant, wayward boys, the most successful criminal lawyer in the country, and a battery of conflicting psychiatrists—should prove magnetically attractive to writers. But thirty-three years have elapsed since the kidnap-murder, and we are surely entitled to wonder why the novelists of the 20's, the 30's, or the 40's did not seize on this drama. Inevitably too a parallel question arises: why now the Leopold-Loeb case rather than the Sacco-Vanzetti case?

The answers to these questions are interrelated. For many of us both Leopold-Loeb and Sacco-Vanzetti have now come to represent two crucial illuminations of American life in the 20s. And if numerous writers and their publics are currently intrigued with that era (for reasons beyond the scope of this brief discusion), the fastening on one sensational trial rather than on the other should be fairly clear to us in the 50's. The Sacco-Vanzetti trial was an ending; the Leopold-Loeb case a beginning. It is not just that Sacco and Vanzetti were in all likelihood completely innocent and were revered as martyrs throughout the civilized world, while Leopold and Loeb were admittedly guilty and were the universal objects of fascinated loathing—although that is not irrelevant. It is not even that Sacco and Vanzetti were poor and Leopold and Loeb were rich—although that too bears on the problem. It is, most importantly, it seems to me, that the Sacco-Vanzetti case is the *last* instance in recent history in which the American people were stirred in great numbers to protest an apparent and gross miscarriage of justice. The issues were clearcut, the verdict appalling. Just so, the Leopold-Loeb case may be viewed as one of the *first* instances in contemporary American history in which official cognizance was taken of the vast murky areas beyond such de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ceptively simple words as guilt and insanity. The issues were as clouded as the motives of the boys, the trial—heard by a single judge—an admission of the inadequacy of jury democracy, the judge's verdict an uncomfortable compromise between revenge and therapy dictated by psychiatric testimony.

IT IS JUST this ambiguity, just this realization—indeed, at times this reveling in the fact—that there are no simple answers, that has proved so appealing to readers and writers of the 50s. In an age which prides itself on its sophistication, its appreciation of complexity, even, at times, on its impotence, it is only natural that Sacco-Vanzetti should be scanted in favor of Leopold-Loeb as a key to understanding the 20s. Perhaps one day our bolder novelists will see in the Rosenberg case the usable tragedy of still another famous pair whose travail illuminates certain aspects of American life not revealed by the two earlier trials, each of which might be said to expose one side of the Rosenberg coin, counterfeit as it was for both accusers and accused. I mean by this that questions accepted as given, or at least questions accepted by both parties in the America of the Leopold-Loeb and Sacco-Vanzetti trials, became—in the America of the Rosenberg trial—public relations materials, to be manipulated by counsel for both the accused and the State:

The question of race and religion. There was no felt need in the 20s to prosecute Loeb-Leopold with Jewish lawyers, or Sacco-Vanzetti with Italian lawyers, or to hear the trial of either pair with a Jewish or an Italian judge. Nor was there a concomitant necessity for either defense counsel or the various defense committees to proclaim the loyal Jewishness or Italian-ness of the defendants of the 20s, as was done with such nauseating thoroughness in the case of the Rosenbergs.

The question of politics. There was no felt need in the 20s to deny that Sacco and Vanzetti were committed and dedicated anarchists. Nor was there a concomitant necessity for the defense to portray the two as innocent liberals who preferred not to spell out their beliefs because the climate was currently somewhat unfavorable to anarchists, because nobody had the right to ask them such personal questins, and because they weren't anarchists at all but just patriotic liberty-loving Americans. The hypocrisy—or the counterfeit, as I have called it—of *all* sides in the Rosenberg case, from the sanctimonious judge who heaped on the heads of the wretched couple the onus for Korea and World War III, to the advisors of the defense show, insistent on portraying the two (with their solemn approval) as flag-waving, Sabbath-observing innocents who had never heard of international Stalinism, was so horrifying as to make the Leopold-Loeb case seem in retrospect a model of well-balanced jurisprudence and honest grappling with presently insoluble problems.

THE AMERICAN MASS public however is not currently intrigued with Meyer Levin's presentation of the Leopold-Loeb case solely because of the honest bewilderment of the judge, or the impassioned humanitarianism of old Clarence Darrow. If the symbolic attitudes of these men, and the fathomless depths they attempted to plumb, help to account for intellectuals' fas-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cination with Leopold-Loeb, there is another aspect, not so far touched upon in the preceding paragraphs, that may possibly explain the rapt attention given by a wider audience to productions like *Compulsion*. I refer to the fact that Nathan Leopold and Robert Loeb were what we call in the 50s teenagers. A special kind of lost teenagers, in fact: juvenile delinquents.

The lost souls whom the readers, the general public, of the 20s cared about were the Jake Barneses and Lady Bretts, the Jay Gatsbys and Daisy Buchanans. The youngsters were busy, as always, having fun; it was the adults who were in deep trouble. (It is interesting to observe in passing how stolidly the audiences of the 50s gaze upon the spectacle of a thick-waisted Tyrone Power and a wrinkled Errol Flynn earnestly and capably portraying those doomed young comedians of *The Sun Also Rises,* in contrast to the enthusiasm with which they greet movies of, by and about teenagers.)

What has happened in the intervening thirty years is that the country has been turned over not to the wives, the widows, and the moms, but to the young. Reading *Life* magazine and the slicks, from *Woman's Day* of the A&P to *McCall's,* The Magazine of Togetherness; seeing the movies of the 50s, from the big-screen technicolor jobs like *Rebel Without A Cause* to the modest black and white films like *The Young Stranger;* glancing at the frightened newspapers, one cannot but be struck by the enormous emphasis placed on the dress, the doings, the designs for living of the young. It is understandable that manufacturers and distributors should concentrate on the fastest-growing market in the country. What is somewhat more worthy of consideration is why in the 50s the one big problem whose existence is universally admitted and discussed in United States is that of adolescent disturbance. More than disturbance, domination of the American scene. In the 20s, Leopold-Loeb were *exceptional*: their comfortable situation, their college cleverness, their social ease, were in themselves so striking as to aggravate the passions directed against the boys and their crime. Today those qualities could be described as almost typical of a substantial segment of American youth.

Is it not extraordinary that during the very period when immigration to the United States slowed to a trickle, during the very period when the last immigrant generation was frantically assimilating itself to the American way, it should have been the immigrant attitude toward children which triumphed over the traditional Yankee attitude? The immigrant faith, often the first article of that faith, was that one must sacrifice all for the children. One came to America in the first place for the children; one labored in sweat shops, coal mines, steel mills, in order that the children might have the American opportunity. One broke one's back, burned out one's eyes, even yielded up one's ideals, in order that the children might have the chance at a college education, a firm grip on the success ladder.

So today the first article of faith is that everything that carries contemporary sanction, from togetherness to religious revivalism, is being done for the sake of the children. The parents move from city to suburb not for themselves but for the sake of the chil-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dren (I speak now of explicit justifications and rationalizations which may not always coincide with actual reasons); the father commutes to work not from choice but so that his children can grow up in the fresh air; the mother becomes a chauffeur not to fulfill a secret desire but because there is no other way, even with the car pools, for the children to get to and from public school, Sunday school, ballet school, music school; and finally the parents hand over their inner selves to the ministration of the community church, not because they believe, or because they expect the act of capitulation will help them, but because they think the children must have "something" in which to believe, even if they themselves need not.

The kind of children emerging from school, church, and station wagon in the 50s would seem best exemplified by their heroes and the heroes of their parents too: Elvis Presley, Sal Mineo, Natalie Wood, even James MacArthur, and—the apotheosis of the entire generation—the late James Dean. The face of each is eloquent of the tormenting discontent of an American youth for which everything is being done, to which everything is being given . . . except a reason for living and for building a socially useful life.

The face of each is one facet of the composite faces of the rich, handsome, gifted, doomed Leopold and Loeb. The sullen sulkiness of the speed-hungry Presleyan, whose motorcycle is his religion; the liquid-eyed wretchedness of Mineo the immigrant's son, who cannot belong; the bouncy emptiness of Natalie Wood, who would die like Joan if there were an ideal worth dying for; the cleancut loneliness of the unloved MacArthur, whose Dad has a closetful of suits but no time for Son; and the astonishingly tortured and grief-ridden countenance of the Dean of them all, dead in his Porsche at 24—these speak more eloquently of the essential quality of American life in the 50s than once did Andy Hardy, Harold Teen, Our Gang or Shirley Temple for their day. Is it any wonder that the terrible story of Leopold and Loeb should return to challenge us more potently today than ever before, a ghost returned to haunt our uneasy consciences?

EPITAPH FOR EROS

Georg Mann

The time has come to relax. Sex is here to stay. The age of pioneers is past. The frontier is homesteaded by the suitcase farmers; main street is lined with porcelain-fronted stores. Now safely in the hands of the Mickey Jelkes and Mickey Spillanes, sex has eased itself out of a situation in which it was once something to be anguishedly against, feverishly for, or even a particular source of concern.

Unquestionably, it's a relief. Thought, analysis, and action may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turn to other fields. Sex is no longer the treatment of choice in *epatering les bourgeois,* a repetitious technique for scratching a ballot of confidence in society as it exists. Four letter words are no longer the passport to both the docks and the doctorate. Even the tired pioneers, retreating from their exposed position in the scouting force, are now willing to admit that even the upper classes have probably been doing very well for themselves, thank you. Other pastimes have elbowed out promiscuity. And those intricate but inherently limited variations on the basic pattern of him and her, once guaranteed conversation pieces, now arouse only a yawn when competing with the attractions of high fidelity and *concours d'élégance.*

Still, although the shouting may have been excessive, the sexual revolution was both fun and functional. Implausible as it may seem, sexual activities *per se* have aroused the abhorrence reserved in some societies for eating meat and milk out of the same dish, neglecting to flee into the jungle when one's mother-in-law looms on the trail, or turning surplus cows into filet mignon. This antipathy to sex was entombed deep in the past, among the obscure archeological lumber below the surface of the human mind, in the myths, legends, and anciently endorsed codes of etiquette never sorted out and sold to the dealers in obsolete ideas. Perhaps inevitably, the mingled elements of ecstasy, ephemerality, and expense made sex an object of suspicion. Moreover, Western civilization itself arose proclaiming out of the one side of its mouth that there was no such thing as sex, and out of the other that sex was unqualifiedly bad. Neither opinion seemed built on the bedrock of human intelligence.

Ridiculous as they were, the professional shrinkers from sex could do no more than run a dead heat with its euphoric friends. The latter promised uncollectable promissory notes on utterly impossible pleasures. The skeleton was hauled from the closet and enthroned on the pedestal once reserved for Kathleen ni Houlihan, or the opportunity to die on any side of an issue involving Danzig. Before contemplating sex, the rigors of rationalism were checked at the door.

II

As sex entered into its imperial modern age, the pendulum crashed through the other side of the clock. Sex became the single key which unlocked the secrets of all human activities. History and art could only be studied after translation into the Esperanto of the erogenous zones. All autopsies were conducted on mattresses. And it was fortunate that dianetics, so to speak, died aborning.

Did A go bankrupt, B stop writing, C achieve alcoholism, or D join the Foreign Legion? Exploration of the bedroom, the bathroom, and the bassinet provided automatic answers. The lares and penates were jostled aside by Oedipus and Jocasta. A tradition developed in which tired but dutiful fathers glowed quietly whenever their daughters entered the room. Daughters glowered at their mothers, beamed at their fathers, and gazed speculatively at their brothers. Sons brooded as they confronted a domestic smorgasbord. Mothers merely basked, figuring that no matter how the cat jumped, they would remain in control.

Art tagged hopefully after the study

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of life. The discovery that men and women, with a gaudy specificity, could be maneuvered in and out of bed, narrowed the playing field. Only a limited numbers of emotions are available for distribution between the sexes, and the possible arrangement of two or more human bodies in four-dimensional space-time continuums is even more limited. Thus, with the plot automatically roughed-in, the novelists could process sex as thoroughly as the stockyards handle a shote, and even show a profit on the squeal.

In an age marked by creative costiveness and critical hypertrophy, it was inevitable that the critics should seize upon the new emphasis on sex to add a new dimension to their gloomy ratiocinations. Competing with Marxists who gleefully superimposed clear cut class angles on everything from tennis matches to turbine mechanics, the sexual theorists uncovered something less than sermon material in stones, and in running brooks dredged up a haul that would have chilled the blood of Kraft-Ebing. Writing a book, painting a picture, composing a concerto simply posted an open invitation to the neighbors to inspect one's linen before it went to the laundry. *Explication de sexe* swept every precinct over *explication de texte.* The bedroom of the Carlyles, the recesses of the Bronte's Haworth rectory, the desk of St. Patrick's deanery, became as clogged with critics as the lower levels of Grand Central Station with commuters before the New Haven trains pull out.

Sitting out in the left field bleachers of modern intellectual life were the hopeful followers of Wilhelm Reich. Long after the ninth inning and the departure of the rest of the fans, these experts lingered on in the twilight, hoping that the glow from their orgones would enable them to find something interesting in the dark.

And then there were the books that recounted, with an enthusiastic masochism, the uniquely unhappy plight of women in modern society. If the authors of these books were right—and their number included more than a few traitors from opposition restrooms—American kitchens were lined solely with wailing walls. A major branch of literary industry developed, whose market depended upon routinely labelling American women as the lost, second or—at the risk of ambiguity—the mislaid sex. Its philippics were catnip for the majority of book-buyers. The sheer volume of accusations obscured the fact that there never have been adequate guarantees for the quality of the product offered by the female sex.

In the simple thesis of these books men were solely to blame for all the ills consequent upon female biology. The cosmic juggling of the X and Y chromosomes which sorts the population out into boys and girls, the fact that wives instead of husbands become mothers, was parlayed into an indictment so devastating that with it Zola could have convicted a regiment of Esterhazys. Deliberately glossed over was the fact that things were no better on the masculine side of the street.

The occupational limitations on women in our society are merely a distinction without a difference; given the local ground rules, women can only expect liberation sideward, not upwards. The freedom from dusting and the dishes thus ends in two daily hours on the committing train devel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oping a creative sales pitch for the new line of industrial belting, or brooding over the drop in production at the Buffalo plant.

III

Purely commercial exploitation was obviously inevitable once the intellectual forces of sex bivouaced on the battlefield. Commercial taboos, once breached, gave all of mass culture as heady a *Duft* as that which emanates from an overworked harem. Once sold itself, sex has sparked the sale of everything from tomato sauce to machine tools, from phonograph records (whose illustrated covers are only reminiscent of the lush back of the bar paintings that characterized saloons during Theodore Roosevelt's administration) to earth moving machinery. Every object offered for sale is advertised as a stimulant for the sexual act, increasing either male aggressiveness or female availability.

The gamut of the sexual theme is demonstrated in the women's magazines. At the back of the book, advertising columns are filled with sexual advice as explicit as that handed down to girls at puberty in some of the livelier primitive tribes. In the front, there are articles which sneer at sex and prove that premarital chastity is worth at least $5,000 a year to the income of the average family.

But most of all, there is the daily impact of advertising aimed at remodelling the female body to increase its customer appeal. The entire female anatomy, from curled top knot to painted toenails, has been redesigned. The general dimensions, drape, and relationship with the azimuth of the female breast have been the focal point of the attack. Mammarism has long since outlasted the Momism of the amateur sociologists. To elaborate the breast, engineering data obtained from the construction of suspension bridges, cup sizes taken over from the gaudy dreams of the olive packers (graded upward commercially from "giant" through "mammoth" to "colossal"), and comprehensive surveys of the inflatability of sponge rubber have been combined to come to a glorious fruition in the modern brassiere.

While the breast has been engineered out, the belly and buttocks have been constrained by harnesses only made possible through the progress of stress analysis. The gluteal muscles, that with their fatty integument possess in simpler societies a size-graded sexual premium of their own, have been compressed by latex, sandwiched with strips of steel, and molded in metal like a fancy gelatine dessert. The middle third of the American housewife who has obeyed the proper advertisements resembles, as she prepares for bed, nothing so much as the cross-hatched face of an incompetent German student duellist. Fortunately, these *Schmisse* of devotion to Eros vanish with the night, only to reappear, slightly out of register, the next evening.

Chemists have trod hard on the heels of the engineers to make the approaches to sex as subtle and efficient as a beartrap. Artificially frizzled or straightened hair, nasal irritants with hopefully licentious labels ("Libido" is par for the course) emerge from the chemists' test tubes, along with uncounted tons of unguents, softeners, hardeners, bleaches, dyes, and suffocators of odor. Properly combined with the recommended laundry soaps and furniture polishes, with the na-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tionally advertised biscuit mixes and the disposable toilet-bowl swabbers, the chemists' products can guarantee that even the drabbest female can be turned into a AA-League Astarte.

Fortunately, not even the most indiscriminate use of testosterone could result in the surplus of sighs, leers, whistles, pinches, and attempts to commit assault in crowded elevators these merchandisers promise. If one product in a thousand had its intended effect, only those female purchasers with a head start to the hills would have been safe. The remainder would have been better off in Berlin when the Russian troops moved in.

IV

The popular arts, following the lead of the skilled craftsmen who engineered sex into control of brand preferences, succumbed gratefully to the opportunity to celebrate the red, hot, and indisputably blue. The valley separating the female breast on the right from the female breast on the left (both revealed just shy of what appears to be the arbitrary boundary of the nipples) was fully as important as wrestling in stimulating the growth of the art of television. The single goal of the motion picture industry is a star with measurements of 48-20-38, possessing universal joints throughout the trunk and pelvis. And the copywriters who prepare the newspaper ads for the film industry were able to develop a respectable pornographic art form of their own.

In the popular novel, sex almost made history habit forming. When fornification, adultery, and rape among the long-since departed palled, larceny, aggravated assault, and murder became to the popular novel what bottling was to Coca-Cola. Intellectually, the revival of interest in the Marquis de Sade is recent. By the time it appeared, the manufacturers of historical novels and detective romances had lapped the Marquis twice. It may be that these excursions into the suburbs of sex, whose extent could only be measured by a dolorimeter, have the self-limiting status of a fad. As Thomas Hood wrote in another connection, "One can't always be stirring the fire."

Commerce likewise lathered the chin of science. Kinsey's first book not only lined the pockets of his publishers, but provided temporary employment for a host of shallow draft commentaries that huffed and puffed while easing Kinsey's liner into its place along the dock. And when Kinsey readied his second volume (itself the object of one of the most efficient exploitation campaigns since the death of Barnum), he was aware that at least two book-length commentaries on his female findings were already in galley form, requiring only the insertion of his percentages in the proper places.

Ambushed in the market place, assassinated on the peaks of culture, the enemies of sex are in full retreat. When female "antiseptics" occupy expensive pages in mail order catalogs, when even the most liberal parent perusing the advertising columns in the *New York Times* might yearn to have it delivered in a plain wrapper, the war is over.

Even serious advocates of sex who have other sources of income are losing their zeal. Realistically, sex is now no more cosmic than cookery. The gods aged fast; Freud is cold, Jung is old, and there's no talon about Ad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ler. And commercially, the constant abrasion of the exposed nerve endings has induced an inevitable anesthesia. Titillation has tired its target. Soap is now being bought to banish dirt, not because it is repetitiously depicted annointing the skin of a willowy blond. The customers have caught on to the fact that the model in the gauzy nightgown does not come with long-wearing percale sheets. Toothpaste wins acceptance because it tastes good, and not because it offers an immediate merger with the buccal mucosa of the open-mouthed model in the ad.

In even advanced circles, it is conceded that reading a book or consulting an expert are not essential passports to a satisfactory sex life.

The passing of sex as the core of man's existence leaves no great vacuum, only the cleared path on the snowbound highway after the plow has been through. Sex has not been abolished, merely piled up along the edges of the right of way to allow the passage of more important traffic. And there is little danger that time will hang heavy on human hands. There are other important motivations for getting up in the morning, staying awake all day, and even for going to bed at night.

Three centuries after Newton, scientists are still only hopefully shying pebbles about on the vast shore of the unknown. The ocean of truth is still largely uncharted, the horizon is still far away. As for the arts, the sign "Help Wanted" has been yellowing on the factory front for lo! these many years. The newspaper headlines provide new daily proof of man's glorious incompetence to rationalize his relationship with either his fellow man or with himself. On the broad scale, the experts finger chemical, bacterial, and nuclear means for hastening man's total demise. On a more immediate level, pressures toward conformity from both the top and bottom are making modern intellectual life a vast, other-directed public housing project. The energies left aimless by the end of the struggle over sex have an entire universe in which to operate.

Politics, anyone?

A new monthly magazine devoted to problems of Asia is now appearing:

THE NEW SOCIALIST

published by:
Socialist Research Bureau

"A journal of Asiatic democratic socialism"

Subscriptions:
$4.00 one year; $7.00 two years.

Write to: THE NEW SOCIALIST, Post Box No. 2532, New Delhi, 5, India

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Leisure—the Wealth of Man

Sebastian Franck

In the Autumn 1957 DISSENT, Henri Rabasseire continued his attack on the Protestant work ethic which he had started with his fine piece "The Right to be Lazy" in Winter 1956. I am in full agreement with him that it is more important to increase our ability to enjoy life than to maintain an ethic which has become a mere justification for the drudgery of others. He is right too in his critical remarks on the role of the Protestant ethic in the history of the socialist movement. He is, however, mistaken in maintaining that Marx was "entirely on the side of Protestants." One reader, at least, has the suspicion that Rabasseire has been carried away by his desire to be a heretic in socialist circles. He uses Marx as a bête noire, though in an unusual manner. Yet the present fashion of Marx-baiting is no less meaningless than the older Marxist habit of replacing arguments with Marx quotations.

This suspicion seems to be justified because Rabasseire himself has coyly confessed in the Winter 1956 issue that after his attention had been drawn to the passage in *Capital,* vol. III, where Marx wrote that the realm of freedom lies beyond the realm of material production proper, he seemed to his regret less heretical than he had fondly believed. He consoled himself with the remark that this passage in *Capital* may not conform with the whole trend of Marx's thinking. This, however, he should have tried to prove, since well qualified writers think otherwise. Thus, Georges Friedmann has seen in this passage the essence of Marx's thinking and quoted it because it expresses so well his own thought. Maximilian Rubel, the only professional Marx scholar working in freedom, has discussed this passage at length in his recent book *Karl Marx, Essai de Biographie Intellectuelle* as most representative of Marx's thought which he summarizes with the phrase: *"Le loisir, voilà, selon Marx, la vraie richesse humaine . . ."* [Leisure—that, according to Marx, is the true wealth of man.]

If we want really to ascertain the trend of Marx's thinking on this matter, we should turn to his notebooks, dated 1858, which were published for the first time in 1953 as *Gundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie.* Here Marx noted down his most intimate thoughts on work and leisure and on the idea of integrated man. Though at the time automation was not even in sight, Marx nevertheless wrote that when it would come, his law of labor value would cease to be valid.

Here, then, are a few sentences from the notebook which should give a true picture of Marx's thinking. They have been translated in the pell-mell style in which Marx hastily jotted them down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the extent that large-scale industry develops, the creation of real wealth becomes less dependent on the time worked and the quantity of labor applied than on the power of the productive agents within the industrial process. The powerful effectivenes of this process is related not to the direct working time expended but rather depends on the general state of science and the progress of technology . . .

To the extent that man becomes the supervisor and regulator of the productive process, labor no longer appears as mainly part of the productive process . . . Man then stands by the side of the productive process, instead of being its main agent . . .

Our present-day capitalists' way of accumulating riches by stealing the working hours of others seems trivial when compared to the newly developed basis which big industry has created for itself. As soon as work in its immediate form has ceased to be the main source of wealth, labor time ceases and must cease to be the measure of wealth, and similarly the idleness of the few has ceased to be the condition for the development of the general powers of the human brain. When this happens production based on exchange value breaks down, and the immediate productive process is freed of its make-shift and antagonistic character. The free development of individuality . . . generally the reduction to a minimum of the necessary work of society, will then correspond to the artistic, scientific etc. education of the individuals, thanks to the time now made available . . .

From the point of view of capitalism, as well as from that of all other former stages of society, this creation of not-labor time [leisure] appears as not-labor time for a few . . . In spite of itself, capital is instrumental in creating the means of disposable social time, so as to reduce the labor time for all of society to a declining minimum and so as to give everyone free time for his own development . . .

Real economy consists in the economizing of labor time . . . It is not at all a question of abstinence from gratifications but of the development of power, of capacity for production and hence of both the abilities and the means for achieving enjoyment. Ability to enjoy is the condition of enjoyment. Saving of labor time means more time, i.e., time for the full development of the individual, which in turn, being the greatest productive power, is reflected in increased productivity of labor . . . Work cannot become play, as Fourier hopes. But Fourier has had the great merit of making his ultimate aim not the revolutionizing of distribution but the revolutionizing and re-establishment in higher form of productive relations. Free time—which is both leisure time and time for higher activity—naturally transforms those who dispose of it into a different type of agent.

The man who wrote the pages from which I have quoted can hardly be identified with the "socialist efficiency expert" whom Rabasseire has called Marx.

Henri Rabasseire replies:

I do not yield to Sebastian Franck in admiration for Marx, and if my sentimental attachment should ever blossom into an academic interest in his private opinions, I certainly will read the volumes of his personal notes as carefully as other Marxologists do. Marxism as we know it, however, cannot be defined in terms of biography; the public figure of Marx is presented to us in the form of the works which he published or intended for publication. And in this whole Oeuvre there is that one passage, quoted by Friedmann

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the true reflection of the "real Marx"—and that passage, alas, was saved for us by Engels!

The fact that Marx predicted automation is beside the point. The real question is: How did he look at consumption and leisure? Not as things to be desired for their own sakes, but as a dialectical part of the economic cycle: the "development of power, of capacity for production and hence of both the abilities and the means for achieving enjoyment." He is careful to close the circuit: "Ability to enjoy is the condition of enjoyment." He is equally careful, and indeed hurries on, to assert that free time is "time for the full development of the individual, which in turn, being the greatest productive power, is reflected in increased productivity of labor." And so not only does he place "enjoyment" in the circuit of production, he explicitly rejects Fourier's (or Schiller's) conception of work as play, and as a good Puritan he has to justify leisure as "time for higher activity." Marx has shown us how we can have more leisure time, but he really did not believe in leisure as a value; he believed in leisure as a means to produce higher values. I am thankful that Sebastian gives me an opportunity to clarify this distinction.

Of course Marx was for shortening the work day and the work week, and he fought for more leisure; he deplored the wasteful use of human forces under capitalism. He saw the possibilities of making better use of people's lives and time, but I am sorry to say that he still saw this under the aspect of productivity, and his only utopian suggestion—the idea of a labor service and the related idea of "education in the factory"—was derived from a system of work ethics. Real utopians, like Fourier, on the contrary, saw the independent value of leisure, and subordinated productivity (or creativity, as they now say in this country) to play. If he admits this distinction, Sebastian Franck either agrees with me less than he thinks or he cannot claim Marx for his ideas. By the way, Sebastian, can't you take a joke which I fondly played with myself? Far from using Marx as a bête noire, I was saying: None of us is free from the idols of his age.

2. Popular Culture and High Culture Critics

Herbert J. Gans

Not so long ago, upper class essayists were functioning as social analysts of the society they lived in by analyzing their favorite belles lettres—usually written by equally upper class authors. Recently we have conceived the idea that in order to understand society one had to analyze the patterns of behavior engaged in by most people, and the popular art forms that they chose and rejected; in short, that in social analysis as in politics, one had to consider the decisions of the many, and not only of the wise few. Harold Rosenberg's determined and stimulating argument for an end to the study of popular culture in the Winter 1958 DISSENT suggests the hair-raising possibility that the pendulum is beginning to swing back.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Rosenberg exaggerates the amount of study being devoted to popular culture in the serious literary magazines or among social researchers. The Reuel Denney-Mary Lea Meyersohn "Bibliography of 200 Studies of Leisure" in the *American Journal of Sociology,* May 1957 shows only too well how little has been done.

If the understanding of society is still a valid aim for intellectuals, the mass media seem to me as important a phenomenon for social research as any other. If the existing studies are without merit, that is a legitimate ground for Mr. Rosenberg's criticism. If they do have insight, then the motivations of the social scientists—or the literary critics functioning as quasi-social scientists—seem less important. Likes or dislikes of the subject of study can sometimes stimulate perspectives that result in new and useful insights. . . .

It is Mr. Rosenberg's angry denial of significance in popular culture (he mentions Li'l Abner and Mickey Spillane as examples) which strikes me as most important. If millions of people choose these works and reject others out of the variety of popular culture productions available, then their choices must have significance in the sense that they reveal something about themselves and society—even if Mr. Rosenberg feels that such people and their choices are irrelevant. Accepting the significance of popular culture may mean that in terms of social and psychological function, the distinctions between what Mr. Rosenberg calls kitsch and art are reduced; but this only proves that we are all human beings. Social function is only one criterion by which the two may be compared or distinguished; that both have significence does not mean they have the same kinds or degrees of significance, or even similar functions, much less meanings or "messages."

The mere act of studying popular culture does not give it an intellectual dimension any more than bio-chemical research adds an intellectual dimension to disease. Nor does the act of research endow popular culture with intellectual justification. If one accepts Mr. Rosenberg's criterion that the only legitimate reason for studying popular art is to do away with it, or to change the landscape, then it may be that even more research is necessary. Is it not possible also that research about the popular phenomena of the day could be as useful to a change in the social landscape as the art which Mr. Rosenberg advocates? Marx and Freud seem to have found this so.

Admittedly, Mr. Rosenberg is concerned mainly with the survival and growth of art which is radical in function, an objective with which I would not quarrel. However, this forces him into an extreme perspective in which all other art forms appear to be homogeneous, and universally undesirable, i.e., kitsch. His definitions of art and kitsch are such that as soon as art finds an audience of non-artists, and develops any kind of non-revolutionary function, it becomes kitsch. His definition of art faces the difficulty that even the most radical art must eventually exist within a social framework larger than the creative coterie in order to achieve its radical function. Moreover, since the non-radical social functions of the arts cannot be ignored as simply as Mr. Rosenberg suggests, the popular arts he calls kitsch cannot be wished out of existence.

This dilemma can be solved in at least three ways: (1) to ignore the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

majority of society's members; (2) to find some ways of raising all members of society to the socio-economic and cultural level at which they have the opportunity for greater choice among all the arts; and (3) to develop some criteria to distinguish between better and worse art (the latter to be called kitsch). The first seems to be advocated by Mr. Rosenberg. The second appears to me to be an admirable aim, in the long run much more productive than bewailing the state of the mass media and its students—and incidentally a solution much more in the socialist tradition. The third seems to me to be an important short and long run objective.

The development of such criteria can proceed only if we take a closer look at what the popular arts mean to the audience who accept or reject them daily. With the help of more research on popular culture products, *as these are responded to by their audiences,* the critical judgment of audiences and professional critics might be synthesized by the latter for the development of these criteria. . . .

MR. ROSENBERG'S ARGUMENT is also another in a series of recent attacks on the desirability of social science research on the part of humanists and critics in the liberal and radical camps—critics from whom one would have expected support of such study. Perhaps these attacks reflect, at least in part, some fear by literary essayists that the more objective—if yet imperfect—methods of sociology will render their skills and prerogatives for analyzing the social process obsolete. In the face of a growing and not infrequently imperialistic social science, this is not hard to understand. But in some cases, the fear is that of Ortega y Gasset's mass man all over again—as Mr. Rosenberg shows to be true of many of the pieces in *Mass Culture.* It is especially sad to see this among those who call themselves socialist writers.

I refer here not to the charges that social science is selling out to the manipulative purposes of Madison Avenue, nor to the debunking of the often narrow and sometimes spurious objectivity of social science method. Such criticisms by humanists are badly needed. I refer rather to criticism like Mr. Rosenberg's, which seems to me to strike at the desire to understand per se. . . .

According to Mr. Rosenberg, "they (the social scientists) have put into practice the notion that a bad work cleverly interpreted according to some obscure method is more rewarding to the mind than a masterpiece wrapped in silence." It is not the quality of the work that social scientists study, but the ability of the work to attract the choices of the audience, and the reasons for it. If attempting to see the meanings that this work has for members of the audience in relation to their own lives is "clever interpretation," it seems to me that we need more of it. Whether understanding a popular work is more or less rewarding to the analyst than the masterpiece wrapped in silence depends also on the mind of the analyst, not only on the thing being analyzed. I find that trying to understand the motivations by which millions of Americans make choices among the varieties of popular arts is a rewarding kind of study. Others may feel equally about the masterpiece wrapped in silence. Both kinds seem to me to be necessary and desirable for developing more sophisticated value and policy perspectives for the future of popular and high culture in our society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

A First Book on Viet Nam

Frank N. Trager

Dr. Trager was formerly Point Four Director in Burma, 1951-53, about which country he has edited and published a number of studies, including the three volume Burma, *Human Relations Area Files, New Haven. In 1956 he revisited South East Asia in preparation for a Rand Corporation study on Marxism in that area. He is presently holding a Carnegie Research Fellowship at the Council of Foreign Relations.*

Joseph Buttinger, ex-European, author of *In the Twilight of Socialism,* wrote *The Smaller Dragon, A Political History of Vietnam,* in part because he had experienced "something of the quality of a conversion" during his first brief visit to Viet Nam from October through December, 1954. He had gone to that country after the Geneva Agreement because he "wanted to see Saigon before it became a Communist city," that is before it would be lost to the Communist Viet Minh, an event he expected "in less than two years." Two weeks after his arrival in Saigon he changed his views. He had felt the "unexpected emotional impact that so many Westerners feel when they first come in contact with the Vietnamese people," an unforgettable impact of "strength, charm and intelligence." He therefore resolved "to communicate to others what had been revealed to him." He had first planned to write a political interpretation of the 20th century Vietnamese struggle for independence and the implications of that partial victory—the 17th Parallel accounts for this—in the continuing contest between the Communist and the Free Worlds. It appears that this will be his promised second book on Viet Nam which he briefly outlines between pages 423 and 469 of this study.

As is so often the case, Buttinger discovered that to do what he intended he had to have some knowledge of and insight into Vietnamese history and culture. The sources were many, varied, predominantly French and, otherwise, written mainly from the French point of view. Europe-centered historical writing is but one expected outcome of European dominance in Asia since the age of exploration and exploitation. To remedy this he produced *The Smaller Dragon,* "so far the only book in the English language that can be called a history of Vietnam." Buttinger readily admits that he is not a professional historian, though even the latter would find this book of value. In the short few years since 1954 he has had to master a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prodigious literature, make it his own and feel secure enough to use it expertly from his own conceptual approach. This he has done.

I DO NOT PROPOSE to review this book in terms of the usual "learned journal" critical apparatus, for I share at least one of Buttinger's motives in writing it: that more Americans become more intimately aware of the newly independent world of South and South East Asia, including Viet Nam. And to do this one must begin to dig into history. Since the area from the Pamirs to the Pacific has been under British, Dutch, French (and earlier, Portuguese and Spanish) control from the 16th century to World War II we, in the United States, have been vastly ignorant of its peoples, cultures and history. Before World War II, and mostly written in the 1930s, there were scarcely more than fifteen scholarly titles produced in the United States on South East Asia. Since then South East Asian area studies have been launched, on the graduate level, at only six universities, though gradually various scholars and institutions have begun to include "non-Western" civilizations and Asian courses in their curricula. That we have made postwar blunders in the area arises as much from our lack of knowledge as it does from another "American Dilemma": to be or not to be genuinely anti-colonialist. Or, to put it another way: to decide when and how we can disregard the interests of our European allies in order to support the nationalist aspirations of non-Communist Asia (and Africa).

Buttinger is acutely conscious of this dilemma. For it is the logical starting point of his history: "Because," he writes, "the struggle for Indochina had been politically hopeless from the beginning (1946), under no circumstances could the war have ended well for France. She lost all of Indochina [as she will Algeria—FNT], and only a political miracle prevented the Communists from gaining all after the signing of the Geneva Agreement in July 1954." Viet Nam was devastated "by the most frightful of all colonial wars ... and the cost to France ... was infinitely higher than her expenses during the forty years it had taken her to conquer and to pacify Viet Nam ... the U.S. wasted four billion dollars (on the French)—a sum with which it would now be able to transform South Viet Nam into an Asian economic paradise within less than ten years."

The second three of his six chapters, by far the better group, are vividly constructed to give the background of this colonial war. The Vietnamese first met the Europeans when the Portuguese arrived on their shores in 1535. They came as traders, conquerors and missionaries. They were followed by the English, the Dutch and the French. In the numerous wars among the contending European powers, Portugal and France vied more energetically for control of Viet Nam. When the traders left because of lack of profits, their respective missionaries remained. As in Albert Camus' story of "The Renegade," the will to convert and the will to power were frequently embodied in the same person. However much they contributed to the indigenous population—for example it was the Jesuits in Viet Nam who transformed the Vietnamese-Chinese ideographical writing into a Latin alphabet which still serves the country—"this merging of religious and mercantile interests must be regarded as a memorable phenom-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enon in the history of Western colonial expansion." Memorable and tragic in its consequences. For the Vietnamese mandarinate—the ruling bureaucracy—"quickly found out that the Christian and the Confucianist views of the relationship between the individual and the state were irreconcilable, and that a number of Christian doctrines, with their effect on individual behavior beyond the private sphere, were bound to destroy the moral foundation of a Confucianist society."

AFTER THE FRENCH were virtually driven from India by the English in the 18th century wars, they renewed their interest in the South East Asian mainland, at first uncertainly between Siam and Viet Nam. (The Portuguese were already finished as an Asian power.) Siam in the 19th century managed successfully to maintain its position as a buffer state between the English in India and Burma on the West and the French interests in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia on the East.

But Viet Nam was less fortunate. At first, the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19th century kept the area relatively free from European penetration. The hero-emperor Gia Long, who succeeded in unifying all of Viet Nam, was the beneficiary of this European respite. He utilized the services of French missionaries but he formulated "a policy of strict non-involvement with any of the Western powers" and bequeathed it to his more adamantly "isolationist" successors. This is Buttinger's reading of Vietnamese history, which is exceedingly similar to the policy followed by the Konbaung Dynastry in Burma at the beginning of the 19th century. The results were also similar, and unlike the pattern of Siam. These rulers hoped to escape the imperialist advance by limiting if not avoiding the trading and missionary patterns of penetration. They failed.

From 1817 on French trading vessels reappeared in Viet Nam. In 1847 France attacked the Vietnamese key city of Tourane. Between 1859 and 1867 France established a colony in the South of Viet Nam called Cochinchina, converted Cambodia into a protectorate and by 1883 had succeeded in establishing by conquest her rule over the rest of Viet Nam, the north called Tongking and the center called Annam. Independent Viet Nam disappeared just two years before independent Burma, in the third and last Anglo-Burmese War, finally succumbed. Both countries lost their independence and set about immediately thereafter to regain it—to throw out all forms of alien, white man's domination. The English called their rule "the white man's burden," the French "la mission civilisatrice."

What, one might ask, were they civilizing? Cultures already rich in the arts, religion, philosophy when the colonnial powers were the "savages" described in Caesar's "Gallic Wars." The question is as rhetorical as the rationalizations of the colonial powers were insulting to human dignity.

BUTTINGER'S FIRST three chapters attempt some answers for the pre-colonial history of Viet Nam. In these he tells about the peopling of the peninsula, the years of Chinese suzerainty and rule and the eventual independence of the Vietnamese before the arrival of the Europeans. Of these I find the first chapter and the part of the second chapter dealing with Chinese backgrounds singularly unsatisfying. I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wish Buttinger had omitted them entirely or shortened them considerably. They are a mixture of economic geography (justifiable), migrations (unclear), anthropology (confusing linguistic, tribal variations and the names given or taken by groups with ethnic and racial concepts). I suggest that the reader skip lightly over these pages and otherwise plunge into the text at the point of recorded history. Admittedly the pre- or early history is shrouded in difficulty which reexamination of much of the 19th and early 20th century scholarship and subsequent research will clarify. Even the early recorded history of the area presents many problems since the evidence comes from annals, chronicles, archeology and epigraphy, etc., which leave much to be filled in. That is why, for example, the reader will find so much purely dynastic history as the main and narrow content for Viet Nam even during her post-Chinese independent period.—But this is another story which in no way diminishes the superb value of *The Smaller Dragon.*

One final word about the book itself. The publisher, Frederick A. Praeger, is to be congratulated on producing an exceedingly attractive and well-printed book, complete with index, maps, illustrations and 50 pages of bibliography, including a few biographical notes on authorities—all for $6.00! Buttinger has supplied 122 pages of notes in relatively small print to accompany the six chapters of text (excluding his Foreword and "Chronology and Summary for Viet Nam since 1900"). The notes are as important and as interesting as the text itself. I am convinced that *The Smaller Dragon, A Political History of Vietnam,* may not have the immortality assigned to dragons in Vietnamese mythology but it will have a deservedly long and useful life.

Lonely Outsiders

WHITE MAN, LISTEN!, by Richard Wright, Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York City, $3.00, 190 pgs., 1957.

No one knows better than Richard Wright that the white man has not listened for a century, has neither plans nor intention to start listening now and probably couldn't listen if he wanted to. The voices of Asia, Africa and the colonial world are blocked to him by an accumulation of rubbish. Wright's book, as he says himself, is for the "Westernized" elite of the non-European world, the "lonely outsiders" existing on the margins of many cultures. Even though it consists of a collection of speeches delivered before European audiences, this book is the author talking largely to himself, about himself and for himself. It is an important book and the neglect it has met in America only emphasizes the blocking off of communication between the West—all sectors of the West—and as Wright puts it, "... a billion and a half colored people in violent political motion."

Richard Wright tells us he is neither perturbed nor unhappy in his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chosen state of "alienation"; from his lonely perch in Paris, a Paris swept by waves of "Americanization" and wasting its last energies in a futile colonial war, Wright keeps both his sense of judgment and his passion. He has not forgotten who he is; Bandung was clearly a turning point for him, the crystalization of anti-colonialism into new forms not understood by the white man nor, for that matter, too well understood by those representing the best democratic and socialist traditions of the West. For Wright, Bandung was the first coming together of that "tragic elite" whose thought and mentality, whose very soul he is attempting to explain to us:

> The present-day attitude of the national revolutionary in Asia and Africa has the quality of a man who has been put to sleep for centuries and awakens to find the world of which he was once a functioning part roaring past him. He is bewildered, hurt, stunned, filled with a sense of self-hate ... The world that such man sees is devoid of meaning. He looks into this or that theory to find an idea of what has happened to him and his kind. And when he selects a theory, whether it be Marxism or any other revolutionary doctrine, he is not so much concerned emotionally with whether that theory is right or wrong, but whether it fits his feeling and most nearly describes what he sees and feels.

To which might be added: and whether it works, gives results, quick results. Indonesia, India, Egypt, Algeria—these are countries in a hurry, a fact that at least partly explains the bitter clashes that occur between groups within the nationalist movement itself.

THE HEART OF THE BOOK is in the two opening essays: the first, a cataloging of the "psychological reactions of oppressed people," and then the key essay "Tradition and Industrialization."* White Europeans freed Asia and Africa from its irrational traditions and customs, but simultaneously created a rootless, westernized elite. This elite, feared and hated by the West, constitutes an island of free men; freer than their most sympathetic supporters of the West since they, at least, are capable of talking action. This elite, says Wright, "must be given its head." Nkrumah, Nasser, Sukarno, Nehru—they are more important to the West than the West itself. This is the only message Wright has to offer; it is a stark one.

Grateful as we must be for Wright's courage in putting things bluntly at a moment when none are listening, does he not tend to be carried away by the starkness of his own thesis? First, it would seem that the central tragedy of his "tragic" elite is that try as it will it cannot lift itself up by its own economic bootstraps; it cannot get around the startling proof recently advanced by Gunnar Myrdal that the gap in wealth between the West and the underdeveloped countries has steadily widened. More important, there is the matter of the vast personal power of men like Nkrumah, Nehru, and Nasser, which Wright tends to gloss over by urging us to believe that the elite seeks power not for itself but for its people. About this, have we not good reason to be skeptical?

Still, the ways of communication must be kept open; and Wright himself is a precious example of what this means.

STANLEY PLASTRIK

* A major section of this was published in the Fall 1957 DISSENT.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life in the Factory

ON THE LINE, by Harvey Swados. Little, Brown. $3.50.

Fiction about factory workers has been a rarity during the past two decades. Most novels at all concerned with work take as their setting and inspiration the air-conditioned offices on Madison Avenue, not the grinding assembly lines. In fact, if one's knowledge of American life were confined to certain literary and intellectual oracles, it would be hard to know that people still work in factories, that the work is dull and wearisome, and that men who spend their lives on assembly lines continue to feel any emotions other than those of gratified contentment.

That factories are still ghastly places in which to work is made very clear by Harvey Swados in his new novel, *On the Line*. Swados has shaken off any remnants of old notions about the workers; he is trying realistically to see what they are like in the mid-fifties. He has no ideological preconceptions to advance, he starts with no confining archetypes. Each worker is distinct: a man who comes to the factory, punches in, serves his time and takes home his check in ways that are different from those of his fellows.

The novel does seem to have one "extra-literary" purpose. Swados has written with marvelous eloquence ("The Myth of the Happy Worker," an article in *The Nation*, August 17, 1957) about the lack of sensitiveness and concern that characterizes the attitudes of most liberals and intellectuals toward factory workers today. The novel is intended not to polemicize or persuade toward a political point of view, but to recall to our attention a major segment of humanity, the people who, despite mortgages and autos, remain, in important ways, the "bottom dogs" of American society.

In Swados' novel the most rebellious workers on the line are the young boys who have either just quit or graduated from high school. One boy, who wears "pegged" pants to work instead of coveralls, expresses violent hatred for the assembly line. Before he quits, he manages to take his vengeance by wrecking four new car bodies. "I came here to earn a living," he yells, "not to kill myself!" Later on he says, "This isn't work; it's slavery!" The older men laugh sympathetically. When the foreman warns him to "smarten up," the kid replies, "I was *born* smarter than some of the characters in this dump!"

WALTER IS a high school graduate who is saving money to go to college. He has to fight certain middle-class notions of his mother in order to take the factory job in the first place. The assembly lines exposes him to social reality. There he meets Joe, "the vanishing American." In contrast to his treatment of other characters, Swados is intentionally vague about Joe; he is, I take it, a sort of oldtime radical, an almost allegorical figure. Joe does his job quietly and one day quits quietly. He talks to few of the other workers, but takes a liking to Walter. "The men on the line like you, Walter," Joe says. "They don't think you're just nosey when you ask questions. They think you're one of them, and in a good way you are. Maybe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that's why I've got hopes for you." Joe is the vanishing radical; in 1957 he is quiet and cool. He encourages Walter to be critical; that is all he can do. Swados writes:

> Walter fought hard against the influence of the older man, whose crabbed and subversive outlook was so foreign to everything Walter had been taught; but he was forced to admit to himself that more and more he was seeing the factory through Joe's cold, discerning eyes, and he began to fear that if Joe were ever to leave, the plant would have no real existence other than as a money-producing nightmare. Not only was there no one else really to talk to about it, but Joe had forced Walter to try and formulate his emerging ideas in an adult and comprehensible way.

Exactly what those ideas are, Walter does not quite discover; and Swados is much too honest and serious a writer to try to say. But if I understand him correctly, what Swados is concerned with is to show us something of the newer workers, those who have not been touched by the experiences of the thirties, and to explore the possible resources for creative action and behavior that is to be found among these younger people. Conditions being what they are, it is not very easy to formulate ideas "in an adult and comprehensible way." But Swados remains sympathetic toward these young people, he is willing to wait and listen to them. Though endowed with a more acute political consciousness than most contemporary novelists, Swados shares with the best of them one important trait: a belief in the potentialities of the young, those who do not turn to an explicit politics of revolt yet are instinctively hostile to the cant of our time, those who "are not with it."

JONATHAN SCHWARTZ

Satirist

THE WORLD IS A COMEDY; A TUCHOLSKY ANTHOLOGY, trans. and ed. by Harry Zohn. Sci-Art Publishers, Cambridge, Mass. 1957.

Kurt Tucholsky, the foremost satirist of the Weimar Republic and perhaps the most biting political commentator that Germany has produced since Heine and Boerne, has until now not be translated into English. This may in part be due to the fact that much of his writing is intensely topical and can be appreciated only by those who are able to place it in the context of the years between wars in Germany. But many of his other pieces transcend the limitations of the period. Some of them have here been gathered and competently translated. Those who appreciate Bert Brecht's theater or Kurt Weil's music will enjoy Tucholsky's work.

L. C.

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS.... Bernard Rosenberg, long familar to our readers, recently co-edited *Mass Culture*.... Leopold Labedz is a Polish journalist now living in England... Michael Walzer, who spent a year in England doing graduate work, last appeared in the Spring 1957 DISSENT, with the "Failure of the British Left."... William J. Newman has also spent a year in England. He last contributed "Americans in Subtopia," Summer 1957... L. Stern makes his first appearance in our pages with what is probably the first lengthy analysis of Lukacs to appear in English... Harvey Swados is well known to our readers for his earlier contributions. His latest novel is discussed above... Georg Mann is a "science writer by trade." This is his first piece in DISSENT, but he has appeared in many other publications, including *Politics* and *New Directions*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miscellany

Okinawan "Showcase" Needs Restyling

Helen Mears

IN THE ELECTION for Mayor of Naha City, capital of Okinawa, held on January 12, there were two candidates, both of whom designated themselves as Socialists. The major issue of the election, according to a *New York Times* report, was "not whether the Okinawans would register opposition to US rule, but how strenuously they would oppose it." The answer turned out to be that the people of Naha would oppose US rule as strenuously as they were allowed to, for they elected Saichi Kaneshi, who had campaigned on a platform of "ousting the Americans and reuniting the island with Japan."

This result "galled" U.S. military authorities on Okinawa. As well it might, since the election was part of a complex maneuver by which the Americans had hoped to replace an "unsympathetic" Mayor (Kamejiro Senaga) by one more to their liking. The January election was forecast back in November last year, when a brief UP dispatch reported that Lt. Gen. James E. Moore, U.S. High Commissioner and military commander on Okinawa, had announced four ordinance changes that "would permit the ouster of Naha's leftist Mayor, Kamejiro Senaga."

Senaga, who had been elected Mayor of Naha on Christmas Day 1956, for a four-year term, had been a bother to the American authorities for almost a year. The government of Okinawa, of course, is an American military dictatorship, but back on April 1, 1952 the military established a system of limited native political participation in domestic problems, subject to American veto. In Naha the people were allowed to vote for a City Council and Mayor.

THE ELECTION of Mr. Senaga affronted the American authorities. As a *Times* report phrased it, "U.S. officials . . . felt thwarted by the very people to whom they had granted the gift of free elections." For several years Senaga had been the most outspoken critic of American policies on the island. In 1952 American authorities had charged that he was a Communist and had sentenced him to jail for two years for "harboring" a Japanese who was also charged with being a Communist and with having entered Okinawa illegally. Senaga steadily denied that he was a Communist, and reports in our press accepted the assumption that there was no proof. He was, however, openly and strongly critical of American policies in the island. His criticisms naturally pleased the Communists in Japan. But Senaga's arrest must have pleased them even more, for he emerged from jail a local hero. And in fact his imprisonment launched Senaga as the spokesman for a growing protest against American policies which became strong enough by 1956 to elect him Mayor.

Senaga charged that the character of the ever-expanding US military instalations proved that Americans intended to keep Okinawa as a permanent base and declared that "most Okinawans" were opposed to this. He urged that Okinawa should be returned to Japanese administration. He especially denounced the US policy of taking ever-larger areas of land away from Okinawans, including farm land, to use for military installations, while giving the displaced Okinawans shamefully inadequate compensation.

These charges won a warm response from large numbers of Okinawans because the land-policy charges, at least, were unquestionably true. An official Congressional investigation (released in early 1956) reported that up till then US military authorities had displaced 50,000 Okinawan families (some 250,000 persons) from their land and homes and had on the average paid each family *less than* $20 *a year* as compensation. American military authorities apparently assume that nobody but a Communist could possibly object to this.

Although temporarily "thwarted" by the ungrateful voters, the American authorities had no intention of taking Senaga's election lying down. Getting rid of him presented some difficulties. *US*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

News and World Report (Feb. 22, 1957), explained the dilemma in these terms: "The Americans could if they wished throw Senaga out of office tomorrow. But that's a totalitarian way of doing things, and American authorities are proud of the limited self-government they permit the Okinawans. Everybody admits Senaga was elected legally."

The Americans soon found other ways of showing their displeasure. They refused to deal with Senaga, and they began to use their economic power to make it impossible for him to function,—indeed for Naha itself to function. As "U.S. News and World Report" explained it:

> Until a decision is reached on how to get rid of the mayor, the Americans and conservative business men in Naha are doing everything they can to make Senaga uncomfortable. All US funds to aid the city have been cut off. The Bank of Ryukyus (an institution controlled by the American military administration) has frozen the city's accounts, and cut off loans to the municipality. Now many companies are refusing to pay taxes. Unless a change occurs, Naha will soon be bankrupt.

It is possible that those who voted for Senaga believed that political democracy was a system by which people could express their dissatisfactions and elect candidates who would try to do something to improve living conditions. Whether or not Senaga sincerely had such aims in mind cannot now be proved. What can be proved is that without giving him a chance to demonstrate his true intentions, or test his cooperation, the American authorities instituted a policy of stringent economic sanctions against the city to force his withdrawal. This policy brought a result in mid-June when the majority of the Naha city Council voted "no confidence" in the Mayor. According to the law as written by Americans the no-confidence vote gave the Mayor the right to dissolve the Council and call for an election. After such an election if the new Council also voted no-confidence, the Mayor was required to resign. Senaga called for the election. It was held in August.

At this point "limited democracy" really went haywire. The number of Senaga's supporters in the Council was doubled from six to twelve.

If the American military authorities had felt "thwarted" by the election of Senaga in December, this increased support, some eight months later, really depressed them. By their own rules there was no legal way to oust Mr. Senaga until his term expired.

The idea that the American authorities might accept the election as a demonstration of democracy, and make an effort to work with Senaga, apparently did not occur to anyone. The presence of a "leftist, anti-American" Mayor in the capital city of "America's most powerful nuclear base in the Western Pacific" gave them nightmares. The problem, as they saw it, was to get Senaga out of office and keep him out. And then came the four new ordinances issued by Lt. Gen. Moore on Nov. 24, which took care of these problems efficiently:

1.) The requirement for a $^2/_3$ majority as a quorum in the City Council was repealed; a simple majority was sufficient.

2.) The Council was authorized to elect a temporary Mayor.

3.) The American-appointed chief executive of the Ryukyu Islands was authorized to settle any disputes between the Mayor and the Council.

4.) All persons convicted of a felony would henceforth be barred from office.

On Nov. 23, the Naha newspapers had reported that the city was in such a financial mess it could not pay its own employes or deal with the most rudimentary civic projects.

On Nov. 24, Lt. Gen. Moore issued his new ordnances.

On Nov. 25, the Naha city Council voted no-confidence in Mr. Senaga. New elections were set for Jan. 12. Under the new rules, Mr. Senaga—having once been in jail for political reasons—was not eligible.

Commenting on the latest election, by which Senaga's successor was chosen, New York *Times* correspondent noted that the opposition expressed against American rule of the islands "seems in some ways an academic point, since there is every evidence that between 40,000 and 50,000

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

U.S. airmen, marines, soldiers and sailors are here for a long stay. It is entirely possible that their successors will still be here when those who voted so enthusiastically yesterday are long gone."

Democracy, anyone?

Dzilas and the Yugoslav Press

THE PUBLICATION of Djilas's book, on August 11, 1957, was greeted by the international press with comments generally favorable to his views. None of these comments was, of course, printed in the Yugoslav press; but there is in that country a publication entitled the *Tanjug Bulletin,* which circulates among the leaders of the system and presents translations of the most important foreign articles and communiqués. This bulletin serves as a barometer to show how Titoism stands with the international press. And from the beginning of August onwards, it was packed with information about Djilas's book.

In the course of a single week three anti-Djilas articles were published at Belgrade—the sign that a fresh campaign had been launched against the former communist leader. Then came a sudden silence: not only did the Belgrade papers drop the Djilas affair completely, but the provincial papers had not even time to open the campaign they were planing.

THE EXPLANATION is simple: the three articles had a boomerang effect, especialy the one published on August 11 by *Borba,* the central journal of the Yugoslav Communist party. That issue of the paper was sold out by 10 a.m., and in some provincial towns people lined up at the newspaper stalls to get hold of a copy. But though *Borba* is automatically distributed to all the organizations of the Yugoslav CP and to every member of the party, everyone knows that not even the party members read it. As for sales, they are practically nil...

So there was only one explanation for this headlong rush: people were hoping to read, between the lines, what Djilas had said against the new leading class. The warning rang clearly in the ears of the Yugoslav leaders. In 1954 the review *Nova Misao* ("New Thought") had published *Anatomy of a Morality,* Djilas's first attack on the governing class, and readers had flung themselves on it. On that occasion the Government retorted by banning the review—the issue carrying the Djilas article had been its first.

As a matter of fact, the readers who flung themselves avidly on the articles in which *Borba, Communist* and *Politika* attacked Djilas's book had their money's worth. Despite the traditional Stalinist insults (disciple of Goebbels, renegade, traitor, enemy of the working class, tool of world reaction, calumniator, etc.), it was possible to distinguish at least two of the ideas put forward by Djilas: that the Communists were a new governing class, with a monopoly of power, ownership and ideology; and that Communism was on the wane; while the former consideration pleased all opponents of the system, the latter gave rise to thought among the communists themselves.

ONCE INTEREST in Djilas's book had been aroused, everyone wanted to read it. Extracts had been translated into French, English and German among other languages, and either printed in magazines or newspapers or broadcast in foreign programs intended for Yugoslavia. So much mail from foreign countries is received in Yugoslavia that it was impossible to intercept all the papers in which Djilas was quoted. Once again the authorities resorted to a straightforward administrative measure: on September 6 the Ministry of the Interior decided to prohibit the admission and circulation of any foreign newspapers or reviews which were reprinting the book or giving quotations from it....

There could never, of course, have been any question of publishing the book in Belgrade. In January 1954, when Djilas put forward his first and much milder criticisms of the new class, Tito, who knew what he was talking about, admitted to the Plenum of the Central Committee, *"If we had allowed [those criticisms] to be published, things as we see them would not have survived for a year."*

BRANKO LAZITCH
[reprinted from *Saturn*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Role of the Scientists

Editors:

So much in Edward Speyer's article, "Scientists in A Bureaucratic Age" [DISSENT, Summer 1957] is merely implied, *so many half-truths are only half voiced*, that it is difficult to know where to start taking issue.

Take, for instance, his paragraph about the prostitution of science. Enlightened thought on prostitution has it that it is primarily a social disease. One can hardly blame the scientists as a group if they are engaging in the same sin as other intellectuals. In fact, if scientists actually are prostituting themselves as a group, Mr. Speyer should not be surprised. After all, he finds science an "often narrow and restricting way of looking at the world." Many others, with a presumably broader view of the world, are doing the same. There are the advertising copy writers, the intellectuals working for the slicks, the PhD economists in market research. I wonder who is doing more damage to society.

All this, of course, is no excuse. But when one puts it in the proper perspective of the society in which it functions, it may become a reason. There remains, however, the question of the extent to which the accusation is true.

I am a physicist; I know about physicists only. We like to think of ourselves as the poets of science, "dedicated" in a more genuine sense than the poets of Madison Avenue. We are also the most vulnerable, for it is the physicists that the military is propositioning with the most lucrative rewards. In a recent survey published in *Physics Today* it was found that 81 per cent of PhD physicists prefer working for a university, and that 40 per cent prefer industry. This with a salary difference of $2,000, roughly 20 per cent. For better or worse, this means choosing marriage over the high earnings of prostitution, and is rather surprising in view of our "restricting way of looking at the world."

One may ask to what extent those physicists working in the universities are sinning. The answer is that faculties pursue their age-old function of teaching and scholarship. It is true that more money than ever before is coming from the AEC, the military, and other government agencies, but on the whole these men are working on the projects they would have liked to work on but couldn't have without the money. The original paper by Lee and Yang on parity nonconservation was published with the following note: "Work supported in part by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission." It almost seems as though it is the scientists who are using the government. This is more like rolling drunks than like prosttution.

There are doubtless many scientists who lack moral integrity, and many others who lack curiosity. It must be understood, however, that a large number have refused military and even government work, and that most of the best are still on the campuses pursuing the search for truth and beauty. But there are many more scientists now than in the good old (love and string and sealing wax) days. Of these, many are working on the kind of project it is hard not to disapprove of. But the volume of scientific workers produced since the war includes not only "geniuses" but also hacks. There are, no doubt, many more scientists now who are not interested in the search for truth, but this is not because of who the scientists have become, but who have become scientists. It is also partly the fault of our educational institutions, which have often given a man a degree that states he has had a university education, when he has had merely a vocational one. Finally, and not at all to be underestimated, is the intelelctual climate in which the young scientist has been brought up. It is here that the social character of prostitution enters the picture.

Just what Church and just whose politics are scientists to rise above today? The fact is that they can no longer rise above any. Of this, Mr. Speyer is aware. Science and scientists are deeply imbedded in our present society, and to expect them to act in ways which are not of our world is nonsense. Many scientists who are aware of the social implications of their work are doing what they can. Others, like so many intellectuals, are wandering (or even walking) the streets, and still other are just sitting on their hands doing what is easiest. To expect scientists,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unlike other intellectuals, to provide leadership is just silly. For this, they must have common goals and must be the kind of people who take to leadership. If they were, it would probably be offered only by the very people whom Mr. Speyer most fears, the Deans of Science, the organizers, the report writers.

Actually scientists as a group, true scientists still interested in the search for "truth and beauty," have managed to maintain their integrity to an extent much greater than have many other intellectuals. This is precisely because we have refused to be led, have chosen to act as individuals interpreting the truth as we see it. We learn from experiences such as those of Oppenheimer. The leadership, such as it is, comes silently from the true "geniuses."

And the ultimate refusal to become a prostitute is also silent. One is outraged at being called ditry names by Mr. Speyer.

EUGENE J. SALETAN

EDWARD SPEYER REPLIES:

Mr. Saletan and I, it seems, are in fairly good agreement on the facts, but he is "outraged" at the interpretation I put on them (even though in one or two places he uses what seem to me more infuriating formulations than I would use). Nonetheless, Mr. Saletan thinks "one can hardly blame the scientists." We are dealing, he says, with "primarily a social disease."

Diseases are *treated;* those who recognize the symptoms in a member of their own family have a moral obligation to urge remedial treatment. To remain silent, as Mr. Saletan seems to think proper, does not measure up to the situation. Mr. Saletan should be outraged, not at my article, but at the things he himself describes. There is a need for protesting letters and speeches, but Mr. Saletan has misaddressed his. The treatment of the disease begins by speaking out; leadership is *not* silent. And as Mr. Saletan's letter shows, one cannot speak out without belaboring those afflicted. But doing that is not as heartless as remaining silent.

Although he starts off by not blaming "scientists as a group," Mr. Saletan says that it is the *young* scientists "who are not interested in the search for truth." I have the impression that there is a fairly random distribution of cynicism with age. Is Mr. Saletan prepared to show that this social disease is a disease of the young?

Mr. Saletan mistakenly attributes to me awareness of the "fact" that scientists can no longer rise above the level of official politics. Mr. Saletan will discover if he looks that he and I are not so different from a great many others, both inside and outside of science, in our view of the Amazing Marriage. The question which divides us is whether to be quiet about it or not.

Russia — 1839

Editors:

Lewis Coser and Irving Howe discuss the nature of Stalinism in "The Role of Ideology" [DISSENT, Autumn 1957.] Though I concur with their analysis in its essential points, I should like to raise one question. Does not their analysis attribute to Stalinism a creative power greater than historically justified once all facts are considered? No doubt, Stalinism is unique—as of course every historical phenomenon is— but did those schemes it has made use of and the attitudes it has displayed arise exclusively from within its own system?

For a long time I shared the view that Stalinism, being historically a creation of our times, had given birth to most of its devices, since these could be understood only in the framework of the system which was itself intelligible only in the historical environment in which it arose.

Historical thinking has given us (as Croce put it) the affirmation that life and reality are history and history alone. Yet, history is also transition and transmission, and this we tend to forget, perhaps, because historical thinking as it came to us from the 19th century was tainted with the idea of progress and change promised progress.

Thus, political creation, even if it was change for the worse, still gave ground for hope that similar action carried out with different means could serve a better cause. Though we had learned from Marx that changes in the socio-economic base do not aways change the entire superstructure and that ideologies may persist after the circumstances which created them have disappeared, we have tended

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHERE DZILAS ROTS... continued from page 98

basement cells, medieval holes so small that only two men could move freely within them. The furniture consists of two strawsacks and one receptable. Yet up to 10 men are here crowded together before they are shifted to one of the larger quarantine cells. A small opening in the ceiling, covered by a thin-meshed from grate provides the only fresh air. Especially in the evening hours, when the scanty light attracts them, a never ending stream of black beetles pours into the cells. During the winter rats also visit.

Each inmate's head is shaven. The clothing consists of two sets of old underdrawers stinking of sweat, a uniform which had been often mended and dirtied, two evil smelling blankets and a metal canister flecked with a green mold. There are rubber sandals for shoes. Not even foot rags are available against the cold.

Fevers in summer, pestilence, digestive troubles because of the rat-infested cistern water, as well as TB and venereal disease—these are among the afflictions suffered by the prisoners. A loudspeaker, with which each cell is connected, roars out Communist propaganda. Sometimes, a man who has died will be exhibited naked in the court of the hospital so that those who are still alive may picture for themselves their own destiny.

The overflowing, airless cells and common rooms—long-stretching lightless shafts—remain unheated in winter. Newspaper becomes a luxury to be wrapped around naked feet as protection against the cement floors. Sergeant Milosch, the first terrorizer for each newcomer, employs a special kind of drill in which he first explains to everybody that he is no longer a man but only a number. Outside of the cell you can move only with arms behind your back and with head bent.

And here it is that Milovan Djilas lives. Nobody can say today that he will escape this hell alive—unless a huge protest from all over the world frees him from his tormentors.

K. H. PULFER

---

to underestimate the power of tradition.

History may not repeat itself, yet certain characteristic features which arise in the formative period of a society not only linger on but become engraved upon social life and permeate all further development. Change is accompanied by continuity. In his *Short History of Russia* B. H. Sumner once showed to what extent Soviet institutions were the continuation of Russian institutions of long standing.

Coming back to the article, I would like to draw attention to the passage where Coser and Howe wrote that if a Beria is one day a hero and next day a villain this may be not unusual, but that by the third day he does not exist must be called new. They also claim that totalitarianism was the first which proceeded to remake the past. Making outstanding people non-existent and re-writing the past was, however, called a remarkable feature of Russia's political scene more than a century ago by the Marquis de Custine, as the following extracts* from his letters will show. Indeed, each of the quotations given below could stem from a contemporary report on travel in Russia. Moreover, the Marquis de Custine, who went to Russia in 1839 as a fellow-traveler of Czarism, and was transformed by what he saw into its enemy, made the point that the pattern of behavior and action which he described and which we find connected with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stalinism was already clearly referred to by earlier authors.

This does not disprove the analysis of Stalinism as a system given by Coser and Howe, nor does it simply that the past has remained intact; but it may remind us of the considerable role that traditional features of Russian society have played in the formation of Stalinism. It may also draw attention to the extent to which Stalinism in Russia has been a counter-revolution.

HENRY JACOBY

• Russian despotism not only has no regard for ideas and sentiments, but it remakes facts, struggles against the evidence—and wins the struggle...

God makes the future; the Emperor remakes the past.

M. R. governed the Empire. M. R. was disgraced two years ago and for two years Russia has not heard his name pronounced, that name which previously was in everybody's mouth. Nobody dares remember him, nobody dares believe in his life—not his present life, but his past life.

They believe that to be disciplined means to be civilized.

If they can ever take revenge for their real inferiority, they will make us cruelly expiate our advantages.

In Russia the tyranny of despotism is a permanent revolution.

Every accident is here treated as an Affair of State.

Social life in this country is a permanent conspiracy against truth.

Whoever is not a dupe is considered a traitor.

—From Marquis de Custine, *Lettres de Russie*, Paris, 1939

TRADE UNION CAREER with POSITION GUARANTEED

FREE TUITION

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union TRAINING INSTITUTE offers an opportunity to young men and women in the 21-35 age group interested in making service to the trade union movement their life work. The 9th annual sessions of the Institute open June 1958 in New York City. Tuition is free. All students satisfactorily completing the year's field and class work are guaranteeed positions with the ILGWU.

REGISTRATION LIMITED

Apply Before April 25

For details and application blanks

GUS TYLER, Director

ILGWU

TRAINING INSTITUTE

1710 Broadway, N. Y. 19

COlumbus 5-7000

Announcement

"The American Communist Party, 1919-1957, A Critical History"

by

Irving Howe and Lewis Coser

will be published in May by Beacon Press. $6.75

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARTNEWS

America's foremost journal of art criticism and art history includes among its contributors: Harold Rosenberg, Meyer Schapiro, Parker Tyler, André Malraux, Cyril Connelly.

New poetry on art by:

Louise Bogan, Richard Eberhard, Paul Goodman, Randall Jarrell, William Carlos Williams and others.

Artists themselves write on painting and sculpture, including Lawrence Gowing, André Masson, Ad Reinhardt, Larry Rivers, Esteban Vicente.

The April issue will include reports from behind the Iron Curtain: the masterpieces in Leningrad's Hermitage Museum, the Poussins shown on its walls, the Matisses hidden in the attics; examination of the newly influential "Socialist-Realist" school in Europe; solving the mystery of El Lissitsky, an abstractionist who was caught in the U.S.S.R. when the Line changed . . . what happened to him, what the Russians think of him in the "Thaw" days.

At least five full-color plates in each issue.

ARTNEWS 32 East 57th Street, New York 22, N. Y.

Please enter my subscription to ARTNEWS at the special rate of 1 year (10 issues) for $6.00—a saving of $3.00 over regular rates.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

.....

☐ I enclose payment ☐ Please bill me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED